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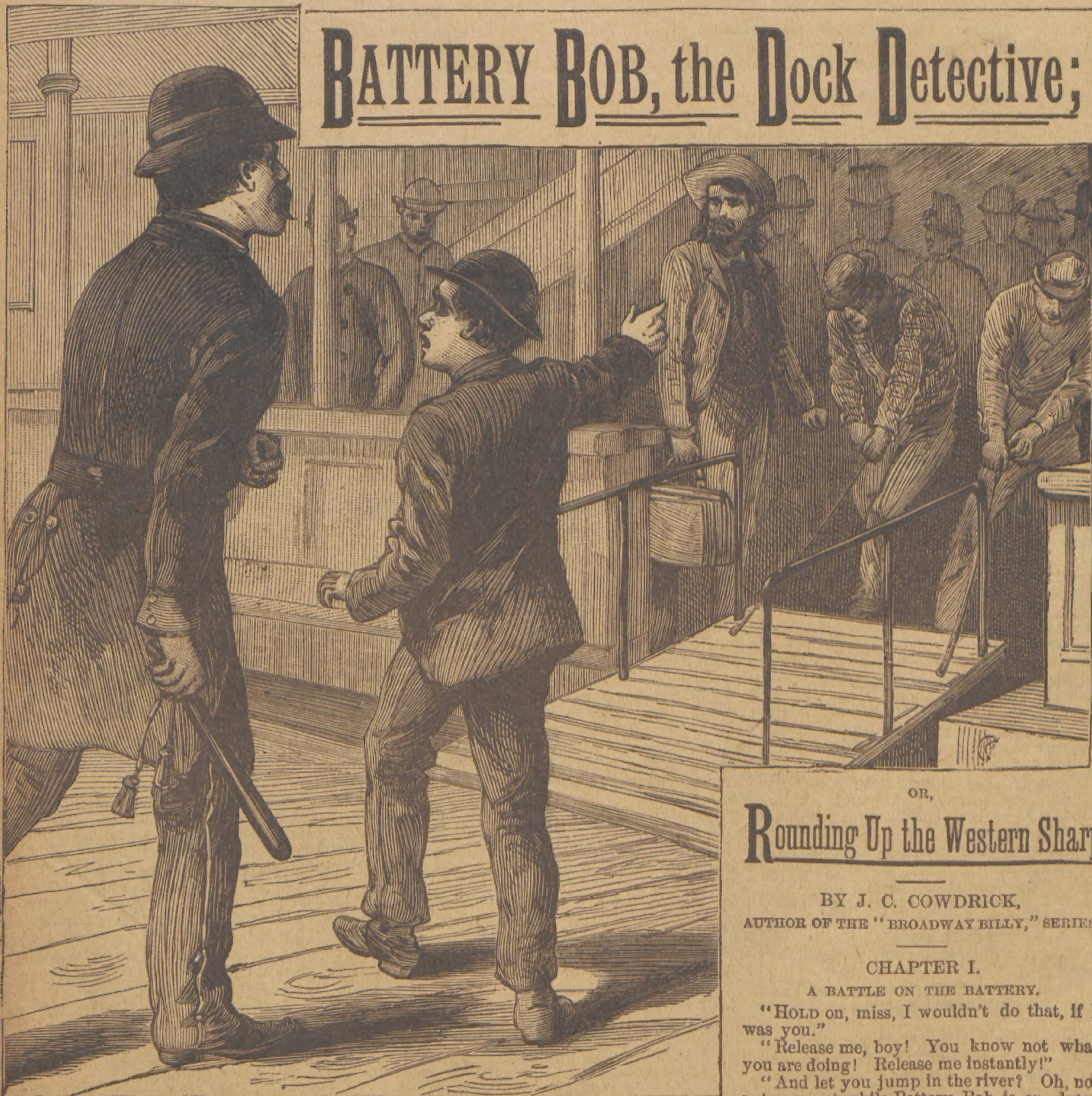
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Vol. XXXV.

BATTERY BOB, the Dock Detective;



"COME, QUICK, FOR THE BOAT IS GOIN'! I WANT A MAN ARRESTED AND HELD!"

OR,

Rounding Up the Western Sharp

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF THE "BROADWAY BILLY," SERIES.

CHAPTER I.

A BATTLE ON THE BATTERY.

"HOLD ON, miss, I wouldn't do that, if I was you."

"Release me, boy! You know not what you are doing! Release me instantly!"

"And let you jump in the river? Oh, no, not any; not while Battery Bob is on duty, thank 'e."

It was on the sea wall at Battery Park, at a late hour at night.

A young woman had just stepped over the swinging chains, and was about to cast herself into the water, when a sturdy boy of fourteen caught hold of her and detained her.

Struggling desperately, the young woman tried to tear herself away, but the boy held fast to her and it did not take long to prove that he was the stronger of the two.

Finding that it was impossible to carry out her intention, the young woman burst into tears.

This seemed to disconcert the boy.

"There now, don't blubber like any kid, miss!" he admonished. "Couldn't be thinkin' of allowin' a purty girl like you to take the cold bath an' make a corpus of yerself."

"Oh, let me go, I beg of you! You force upon me a far worse fate, if you compel me to live. Let me go, I say, and quickly, before some one else comes this way. I must die, I tell you, here and now! I will not live longer! You must, you shall, release me!"

"Oh, no; no, no; you can't do it this evenin', miss. Think I'll have to signal Terrence McDougal to come and take care o' you."

"Who is he?"

"One of the finest, with the purtiest mustache of any copper on the force, and he—"

"No, no! Do not call him, I beg! He would arrest me, and that would only bring disgrace upon my poor mother. Let me go, please; I am calm now, you see, and I will go home."

"Mebbe you will."

"I promise you faithfully."

"You say you have a poor mother, miss?"

"Yes."

"An' she loves you?"

"Yes."

"An' you love her?"

"Yes, yes; dearly love her—"

Choking sobs broke her further utterance, and she leaned against one of the stone posts for support.

In this position she covered her face with her hands, sobs shaking her form and tears trickling between her fingers, and dropping to the ground. What was her sorrow?

"I'm a heap sorry for ye, miss," spoke Battery Bob—as he has introduced himself, "but I can't cry, worth a cent, not knowin' what's the matter. But, if you have got a mammy, and she loves you and you love her, you had orter be 'shamed of yerself."

The girl sobbed the more, and her tears sprung forth afresh.

"Yes, you had orter be 'shamed of yerself, to think of takin' your own life an' heapin' sorrow upon her," the boy continued, in a manner in advance of his years. "Now, the best thing you kin do is to go straight home and tell yer mother all about it, an' see if she don't pull ye through. I ain't got no mammy m'self, but I have got Betsy Sokup, and I don't know what I'd do without her, sometimes."

"Ashamed! As if it were not shame that is driving me to this desperate step. Boy, you do not know, you could not understand were I to tell you."

"Don't you go for to discount my understandin', miss. I didn't cut my eye-teeth on rope's ends around the docks for nothin'. Now, what's goin' to be done 'bout your case?"

"What do you mean now?"

"Will you go home? or shall I signal fer Terrence?"

"Have I not promised you that I will go home? See, I am calm again now, or almost so."

"Yes, but there is a look in yer eye that I don't like. Your plan is to shake me off and then make another run for it and jump in, anyhow. But, you can't do it while I am around."

"Oh! why were you here to hinder me?"

I might now be out of all my trouble, and where no one would ever find me."

"And your poor mammy a-lookin' her eyes sore for ye, and a-cryin' her heart out, mebbey."

"That is something I had not thought of!"

"Then it's time ye did."

"I thought only of the wrong I have done her, and of the shame I have brought upon myself and her. Oh! that I had only listened to her advice, and had not been so self-willed."

"Know jest how it is myself, miss. Now there is Betsy Sokup, just as good to me as a mammy could be, and when I don't listen to her advice I am almost allus sure to be sorry for it. She's no old foggy, ain't Betsy, an' when she says black is black it ain't no other color."

The girl seemed to forget her errand, and to become interested.

"And who is Betsy Sokup?" she asked.

"Why, she's a candy-and-cakes woman that has a stand over there on a corner of the walks by one of the iron pillars. She's a darling, even if she is old, and I ain't the only one who thinks so, either. There's Jack Tarr, he loves the very ground she stands on; and he'd marry her in a minnit, too, but Betsy she won't have him. You see, Jack has got a wooden leg, and Betsy draws the line at wooden legs. That's the reason they stand off."

Now the girl smiled in spite of herself, and moved away from the edge of the wall.

"How droll you are," she remarked, drying her eyes. "But, who are these coming this way?"

"Give it up; let's move along the walk."

They started, but the two men—such they were—followed them, approaching at a quick pace.

Battery Bob and his companion turned and faced them, and in the same moment the men were at hand and one of them called out to his comrade:

"There she is! that's her!"

"Then let's hurry with the job."

With that, they sprung forward together to the attack, when Battery Bob put a whistle to his lips and blew a sharp, shrill signal.

At the same time the girl gave voice to a cry, and turning, ran with all her speed from the scene, in the direction of the streets, leaving Battery Bob to face the two men alone.

One of the men started to pursue the girl, but Bob threw himself in his way on the walk and the man fell over him and sprawled full length, and as he fell a whistle was heard in the distance in response to the signal the boy had sounded and Bob knew help was coming.

As the first man went down, the other made a dash after the fleeing young woman, but Bob was too quick for him, diving between his legs from behind and bringing him to the ground on his back with a heavy jolt.

Both men were cursing roundly, but not in loud tones.

The first having got upon his feet, now made a dart at the boy, but Bob was not to be easily taken.

He ran off with a light laugh, dodging around one of the Park benches and making a dive under another, and by the time the second fellow was on his feet the girl was lost to sight.

"Curse the luck!" one cried.

"Rather curse that infernal boy!" growled the other.

"Hal now for it; here's a copper! Chase the shadows, partner, and lively!"

A policeman was seen running to the spot, and the two fellows took to their heels and were off.

The officer ordered them to stop, but they

paid no heed, and as each took an opposite direction they made good their escape, and there was nothing for the policeman to do.

"Too bad you couldn't 'a' got here a minute sooner, Terrence," cried Battery Bob, making his appearance.

"Hal is it you, Bobby? Sure, Oi couldn't get here a minute sooner than Oi did."

"That's what I'm sayin' is too bad, for we'd scooped 'em."

"Who was they, Bobby?"

"Give it up, Terrence. I was takin' a walk with my best girl, right along here, when they pounced down upon us and I had to stand them off till my girl got away. They was a brace of bad ones, no mistake."

"What are ye giving me, Bobby? Your best gurrel, was it? Then it was Ould Betsy Sokup, Oi'll be bound. But, tell me all about it, and no fooling out av ye. Oi know there was somethin' up, for you are not the lad to be gettin' up a scare unless the wolf is around."

Thereupon, Battery Bob related all that had taken place.

CHAPTER II.

BOB STRIKES A TRAIL.

"THIS is the divil's own case, Bobby," remarked the policeman, when he had heard all.

"Nixey, M'Ginnis!" cried Battery Bob, with force of utterance; "it's my case, Terry, and don't you forget it!"

"And it is yerself that's the divil's own imp, Oi'll be bound," the officer rejoined. "But, what do ye mean to do wid it, Bobby?"

"Work it up, of course."

"Bah! go 'long wid ye. You think because you have helped the police two or t'ree toimes, dhat you are a full-grown detective, don't ye?"

"Oh, no, Terry, nothin' of the kind; but you kin bet your billy that I am goin' to know more about that young woman and them toughs that wanted to do her harm. I see a nigger in de woodpile."

"Well, Oi wish ye luck, me b'y."

"And you'll help me, won't you, Terry?"

"Dhat same Oi will, an ye scare up the game."

"Nuff said, then. Are you goin' to report the case?"

"Sure Oi am."

"No need for me to make special mention of it to the super, then. Tra-la, Terry."

"And is it off ye are already, Bobby, b'y? Ye little imp, ye, Oi would like to know whin ye find toime to ate and slape, for it is always on the Battery ye are."

"Plenty of room here to eat and sleep, Terry, and a cool sea breeze all night to keep off the skeeters, when any happen to stray over from Jersey. You'll find Battery Bob on the Battery when he ain't elsewhere, bet your buttons."

With a light laugh, a wave of the hand, and a cheery good-night, the lad was off and away.

The officer looked after him for a moment, then sauntered leisurely in the opposite direction, swinging his locust and whistling "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

"I wonder if that gal he is whistlin' about was his last landlady, and how far behind he left her," muttered Battery Bob, reappearing upon the same scene a few moments later. "Terry is a good feller, but he ain't in it this hand. He's goin' to make mention of the case at the station, and that gal I saved from makin' a coroner's subject of herself don't want her name known. Not that I am ever likely to find out, but I've got an idee and I didn't want Terry around when I proceeded to act on it, for if I found anything he'd mention that, too."

Making sure that nobody was near, Bob returned to the spot where he had hindered the girl from jumping into the water.

Here he got down and eagerly scanned the ground.

"Was 'most sure I heard somethin' drop when she was tryin' to tear herself away from me," he muttered. "Too bad them two toughs had to put in their appear, for if they hadn't I bet I'd 'a' found out who she was and all about her. On the other hand it was lucky for her I was here to stand them off while she got away. But, has she only gone and chucked herself into the water after all? Guess not, for I seemed to touch a soft spot when I talked about her mammy, an' I think she changed her mind 'bout feedin' herself to the fishes. Mighty funny case, all around, fer she was the party the toughs were lookin' for, 'cordin' to what they said. She was in a peck of trouble, no gittin' 'round that, an' jest as desperate as a cat in a crate of lobsters. Hello! what's this?"

He had found something

Picking it up, whatever it was, he leaped to his feet at the same time he uttered the exclamation.

"What the mischief kin it be?" he asked himself, as he hastened off in the direction of an electric light with his find. "It ain't a pocketbook, nor yet a match-box, though it does 'pear somethin' like the last. Somethin' in it, anyhow," giving it a shake by his ear. "I'll find a way to get into it, bet my hat. If I can't, Betsy Sokup, can in the mornin'. It's purty, tickle me if it isn't!"

The object in question was a pretty card-case inlaid with pearl and turquoise, and Battery Bob, having reached the light, looked upon it admiringly.

A line near the top indicated where it was to be opened, and trying it, the hinged lid was easily lifted and some visiting cards were disclosed. Battery Bob gave an ejaculation of delight.

It was but the work of a moment to get one of the cards out for inspection.

The card was a dainty affair, neatly engraved.

It bore the name—

EDITH ALLEN.

"That's a purty name, as I'll take my af-fydavvy to," cried Bob, under his breath.

"But where does she live? That is to say, if she is still in the land of the living. But, I guess she is. Let's see, mebbe some of the rest of these tiny shiners will tell the tale."

Battery Bob took them all out of the case, and examined them one by one, and presently found one with a penciled address under the name—

No. — West — St.

"Ha! now the sap begins to flow!" the boy cried joyfully. "Reckon I have got business up in that vicinity o' neighborhood purty briefly. Nothin' more to be diskivered here, I guess."

None of the other cards revealed anything, and putting them all back into the case, and the case into his pocket, Bob tightened his hat on his head and struck out at a quick walk for the station of the Elevated Railroad and was soon rolling away in the direction of up-town.

Alighting at the station nearest the address on the card, he lost no time in making his way to the number designated.

He rung the bell.

Late as it now was, there was a light in the hall and also in the front room of the house, which was a building of no mean style.

The door was promptly opened.

"Does Edith Allen live here?" Bob asked hurriedly.

"Yes," the brief answer. "Do you bring word from her, sonny?" was added.

"I want to see her mammy," said Bob.

"Step in, then."

Bob complied, and the servant, closing the door, bade him wait right there a moment.

She was about to go down the hall, when a door opened and a woman's voice inquired:

"Is it Edith, Martha?"

"No, ma'm, but a boy asking for you."

The woman came out immediately, urgently demanding:

"What is it, my boy? Speak out quickly, I beg. What brings you here?"

"Don't crowd me, ma'm," said Bob, in response. "Want to see my way clear before I slash in."

The woman looked at him wonderingly.

She was a fine-looking lady, past middle age, with silvery hair and a sad expression.

"Your daughter is out, I take it," Bob added.

"Yes, yes; what do you know about her? If anything has happened, pray tell me quickly."

"Don't know nothin', ma'm, not a thing. That's what I kem here for. No objection to tellin' me where she has gone to, I s'pose?"

"Why, no; she went out to a play, with a gentleman, and I have been expecting her in every moment for the past hour. Even if they took supper, they should have been here ere this."

"Who was the gentleman?" asked Bob.

"John Barr."

"And who is John Barr?"

"Why, boy, your questions are almost impertinent. I do not know you. You have all the manner of a cross-examining lawyer. If you bring me any information, let me hear what it is instantly."

"Keep cool, ma'm; don't get excited about nothin'," quietly rejoined the boy. "I ain't no lawyer, and as fer bein' cross, I ain't the least bit so. The fact of the business is, I wanted to see your daughter, but if she ain't at hum I'll have to call again."

"You wanted to see my daughter—you?"

"The same, ma'm."

"And for goodness' sake, what did you want to—"

But, at that moment a step was heard, a key was thrust into the latch, and the front door swung open.

Into the hallway stepped the girl whom Battery Bob had rescued on the Battery, and at sight of Bob she stopped short, her face turning to ashy paleness.

For a moment all stood silent and motionless, as if they were practicing for tableaux, but Battery Bob quickly broke the illusion in order to give the young lady a cue to the situation.

CHAPTER III.

THE PLOT BEGINS TO THICKEN.

"I TAKE it this is your darter, ma'm," the boy from the Battery broke out. "Had jest been askin' yer mammy 'bout you," turning immediately to the young lady before any one else could speak. "I found this here thing," showing the card case, "and findin' your name and 'dress in it I fetched it around thinkin' mebbe it would be wuth a quarter more or less, the which same would nicely pay fora night's lodgin' and give me a breakfast besides. But, it don't matter; if ye haven't got it handy I'll leave my name an' 'dress an' you kin send it around to my office to-mor-row."

Bob rattled this off as rapidly as he could speak, almost, at the same time moving toward the door.

The servant had to laugh outright, more at his manner than at the words he uttered, and even the sad-faced mother smiled.

"It is certainly worth that much to me to recover my card-case, young gentleman," said the young woman graciously, accepting the proffered article. "I was not yet aware I had lost it. I suppose you picked it up in

front of the theater—but, no matter. Here is the reward you ask. And you say you have an office?"

"Well, call it a headquarters, then," Bob modified, laughing, and he took the quarter offered.

"A headquarters? Where is it?"

"Battery Park, in care of Betsy Sokup, the cardy-and-cakes woman."

"Well, accept my thanks, anyhow," laughing. "If I ever visit Battery Park I will certainly ask for you."

"Be glad to see you," rejoined Bob; and having turned the knob he opened the door and passed out, saying a cheery good-night, and would have closed the door after him but the young woman held it.

"You have not told me your name," she reminded, looking out.

"Ha! that's so; thought everybody knowed me; forgot I was so far away from my own stampin' ground. My name is Bob Dickery, called Battery Bob fer short, an' sometimes Dickery Bob, because I'm allus around the docks. Oh, you can't help findin' me if you find Battery Park."

While Bob was speaking the young woman stepped outside the door.

"Have you told anything?" she whispered.

"Not a word," Bob answered.

"Well, listen: I have lost a valuable paper, and you must find it for me if you can. You will know where to look; follow the way I ran, too."

She explained the course she had taken throughout.

"I'll find it if it's to be found," declared Bob. "Shall I fetch it here if I do find it?"

"Not by any means. I will go down to the Battery and see you to-morrow, and if you find it you may give it to me then. Say no more now."

"Changed your mind, then?"

"Yes."

With that the young lady gave a light laugh, as if she had been joking with the boy, and drawing back into the house, closed the door, while Bob went off whistling Terrence McDougal's tune.

"This case beats everything 'cept Betsy Sokup's cakes," he presently declared. "Never seen anybody git over the suericide blues as quick as that gal did. Guess she must 'a' made a mistake when she thought that was the right remedy fer her complaint, whatever her ailymint kin be. Lost a paper, has she? Well, I guess I'll have to scout around and see if I can find the dockymint. Hello! Battery Robert, you are out of your lattitude here, and the quicker you git back again to your own retreat, the better. You need a sea breeze to keep your buoy a-bobbin'."

This break was caused by the fact that he had passed the stairs of the Elevated Railroad while thinking, and had to turn back again.

In due season he was once more at the Battery Park.

The hour was now late indeed, but this was nothing to the young dock-rat detective—as the police had come to call him.

Have we fully introduced him? A sturdy boy of fourteen years, with black hair and flashing eyes of the same color. He had grown up along the docks in the vicinity of the Battery.

He himself has given us his rightful name.

When he neared the place where the reader first saw him, to begin his hunt for the lost paper, he was suddenly confronted by his friend the policeman.

"What, Bobby, is it back again ye are?" cried McDougal.

"And is it back again you are, too, Terry?" responded Bob. "Thought you had holed away for a snooze before this time."

"Get out, ye bia'gard, ye! Ye know very well that it is Terrence McDougal that never sl'apes a wink whin he is on duty. By the

same token, how is it that you are still out av your rat-hole?"

"I have been playing detective, as you know."

"Been playing the divil somewhere would be more loike it, Oi guess. Oi will have to be telling Betsy Sokup to have an eye out fur ye, me b'y."

"Don't trouble yourself, Terry."

"Or tell Jack Tarr to take ye in hand."

"He has got more in hand now than he kin manage, old feller. Say, Terry, I am goin' to make a match between him an' Betsy Sokup, see if I don't."

"Ha, ha! Dhat same can't be done, Bobby. The wooden leg is in the way, you know, and it is not yourself that can be afther giving Jack a leg of any other sort, Oi venture to say."

"Well, you just wait and see, that's all."

"Oi guess it will be a long wait."

"Not as long as you might think. I have got an idee. There is somethin' in my head besides mush, Terry."

"Oi am glad to hear it, on me word. Oi would never have suspected it, Bobby. It is not overabundance of brain that ye are afflicted with, Oi'll be bound."

"Don't you be too hasty about namin' my ailymint by your symptoms, Terry, for you might make a mistake, don't you see. Well, good night to you: try to keep awake till the roundsman comes."

"Get out with ye!"

The officer made a feint as if to chase the boy, and the latter ran laughing away.

These little tilts were quite common between Battery Bob and his policeman friend, and McDougal rather enjoyed them. He now strolled on his way, whistling his favorite tune.

"I wish he'd go back and get that girl, or else give us something else," muttered the boy. "It has got to be rather tiresome, now, and it is away out of date. Think I'll have to write him a letter and tell him the girl he left behind has died of old age, and see if that won't wean him off. Now, soon as he gets far enough away I'll begin my hunt."

Bob was walking quietly back in the direction of the place where he had had the struggle with the girl, and where he had found the card-case.

It was light enough for him to discern a paper, so he did not have to get down upon his knees this time.

Reaching the starting point, he looked carefully around.

No paper was to be seen.

That being so, he moved in the direction of where the struggle with the two toughs had taken place, and thence on in the course the girl had taken when she ran away.

All the time he kept a careful lookout in every direction for a glimpse of anything white that might appear.

He found it not, however, and finally he came to the street.

"Well, that settles it," he said to himself. "Don't believe I'll find it, but I'll go on the rest of the way to where she took the car, anyhow, and then if it ain't to be diskivered it won't be any fault o' mine. This has been a night of hustle, I be chewed if it ain't, an' I'll be— Hello! there's somethin' looks like paper!"

He was crossing the street, when something in the gutter caught his eye.

Running to it, he picked it up.

Sure enough, it was a paper, and it was folded and clean, proof that it had been lost rather than thrown away, and the boy ran with it to the nearest light.

Battery Bob could read and write, thanks to his own efforts and Betsy Sokup's assistance, and so needed no help in making out what the paper might be provided only that it was in English.

Reaching the light, he opened the paper immediately, and the very first words it contained caused him to whistle.

The words were these:

CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE.

"The plot begins to thicken," the boy muttered. "I'll bet my Edith Allen is a Mrs. Somebody-or-other, and her mammy don't know anything about it— Sure enough, here it is, and married this very date, too—rather yesterday, now, for we have passed over into to-morrow, by the clock. Yes, here it is, plain as day: 'Edith Allen made the lawful wife of John Barr, this so-an'-so day in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-four. Barr, old boy, you are at the bottom of that girl's trouble, but I'm onto you as big as a fire-horse, you bet!'"

CHAPTER IV.

BOB IS RIGHT IN IT.

"Yes, and we are onto you."

These words were hissed into the boy's ear.

At the same instant rough hands made him a prisoner, and his struggles were useless.

Struggle he did, nevertheless, as long as he could, but that was not many seconds, for he was in the grasp of two powerful men.

Battery Bob had quickly thrust the marriage-certificate out of sight, and had made the effort to place his police whistle to his lips, but was prevented from doing the latter.

"No ye don't!" hissed one of his captors. "We'll see that ye don't do nothin' like that, sonny."

He clapped his hand over the boy's mouth as he spoke, and next proceeded to gag him effectually with a handkerchief, which was quickly accomplished.

"There, you young rat!" cried the other, in a whisper. "I guess we'll see to it that you don't do any further mischief. You know too blasted much to be let off, I can tell ye."

"You are right he does," the other agreed.

This worthy had searched for and found the paper, which he transferred to his own pocket.

"What's to be done with him?"

"We'll pitch him into the river."

"Let's be about it, then."

"Come along."

Together they seized their victim anew, and bore him quickly out of the circle of the electric light.

It was now so late that the Park was almost entirely deserted, and there was every chance that they would be able to carry out their heinous scheme unseen.

Not many paces had they taken, though, when they caught sight of a man moving toward them, not far away, and they sprung aside and dropped to the ground in a spot where the shadows were deepest and blackest.

Battery Bob felt a knife at his throat.

"If you so much as move a finger," was the warning given, "I'll slit your neck for you!"

Bob was in no condition to answer, though he undoubtedly would have done so had it not been for the gag that had been applied to him, spite of the threat that had been made.

The man came on, and as he drew nearer it could be made out that he was a policeman.

Battery Bob knew who he was, if the others did not.

Bob was in no situation to draw his attention, however, for, besides the awful threat that had been made, the men were holding him so that he could not move, and he was helpless.

The officer moved on, not quite near enough to observe the men crouching in the shadows, and Bob shared the fate of the girl he was whistling about.

"Danged if I didn't think we wur in it," growled one of the men, when the officer had gone.

"Me too," chimed in the other, relaxing his hold on Bob.

"See anybody else in sight?"

"No."

"Then let's do this job and get out of here."

Both had greatly loosened their grip upon the boy, and now, with a sudden move, Bob was on his feet.

He essayed to run, but the men were too quick for him and pounced upon him like a pair of cats upon a helpless mouse, and he was again taken prisoner.

"No ye don't!" cried one.

"And if you try it again you'll git a taste of steel," the other.

They now hurried him in the direction of the river, taking the darkest route they could pick out.

No further obstacle came in their way, and it certainly looked as if Battery Bob must meet the fate they had laid out for him.

They came to the sea wall, and there they lifted the boy clear from the ground, one taking him by the arms and the other by his feet, and so they swung him.

Two or three times thus, and one of the fellows whispered—"Go!"

And Battery Bob went.

With a tremendous swing, they sent him flying outward over the waves, and he dropped into the rolling water with a loud splash.

Immediately the two fellows ran back again into the shadows, and nothing further was seen of them in the Battery Park that night. Like shadows they had come, like shadows gone.

For some moments nothing was seen of Battery Bob.

In fact, he was not seen at all, but he might have been had there been any one at hand to observe.

Presently his head appeared above the waves, and he shook it much as a water-dog would have done, after which he treaded water while he proceeded to untie the gag and free his mouth.

He was at home in the water.

"Well, them's the softest guys I have run up against in a long time," he said to himself, without the least show of excitement. "And there is one clue I have picked up 'bout 'em, too. They ar' strangers in New York, or they would know they couldn't drown a dock-rat without a stone to his neck. They would have tied my hands, I guess, if they'd knowed I kin swim to Staten Island an' back again. And they got that dockymint, hang 'em! That was what they was after the first time, no doubt, an' they have been playin' the detective on me, an' I was such a gilly that I didn't tumble to their game. But, then, never s'pected it."

He ceased treading water now, and swam easily and leisurely back again to the wall, and presently found a place where he could climb out.

The night was a warm one, otherwise he might have shivered worse than he did.

He did not tarry long there, however.

Making his way in the direction of the dock under which he had his bunk, he had almost reached his destination when he came face to face with Terrence McDougal once again.

"May the divil fly away with ye, Bobby," the officer cried. "Is it still out and a-prowling around ye are? It is a foine notion to run ye in Oi have."

"Don't go to that trouble, Terry," responded Bob, cheerfully. "I am running in myself, as you can see."

"And bless me if it isn't all wet ye are!"

"That's what's the matter, Terry. Don't touch me, or you will get spots on your fine indigo."

"But, what the old mischief have ye been up to, anyhow?"

"I've been clear over my head, Terry."

"Oi should say ye had."

"I'll tell you how it was, Terry. You see, I needed a bath, and my clothes needed washin', and to make one job of the whole matter I jumped in and did it that way."

"Begob! but it is the boss liar ye are, fur a chip av yer size and weight," cried the officer.

"Don't ye believe me, Terry?"

"Oi don't."

"Well, didn't hardly suppose ye would, anyhow. I'll try it again. The fact of the business is two toughs got hold of me and chucked me in, which they wouldn't done if you had been wide awake."

"Now it is lying again ye are, Bobby."

"There, what is the use of trying to be a George Washington, anyhow? Can't you tell the difference between the truth and a lie?"

"Not when it comes from you, Oi'll be bound."

"Then it's no use my telling you anything else. If you can't pick the truth out of two stories, what would you do with three? There's one thing sure enough about it, anyhow."

"That you are wet."

"Yes."

"And do ye mean, fur honest, that ye was t'rowed in?"

"That was the situation, Terry, true as news in the *Sun*. When you see it in the *Sun*, it's so."

"And who was it t'rowed ye in?"

"The same toughs I told you about awhile ago."

"Then, begob, it was revenge they were after taking out av ye."

"That was about the size of it, Terry, I guess. If you see them, pull them in."

"Oi will that same, Bobby, and don't you forget it. This has been a night av excitement on the Battery, and Terrence McDougal has not been in it worth a cint. But, my turn is coming, Bobby, b'y."

Presently they parted, and Terrence went on his way.

CHAPTER V.

JACK TARR HEARS SOMETHING.

On the following morning Battery Park awoke bright, green and sunny.

And so cheerful and pleasant did it look, that one could hardly believe the night had witnessed such events.

Gradually the city awoke to another day of bustle and commotion, and in due time Battery Park had its share of what was going on, though here was less activity than at some other points.

Battery Bob was around, with his face bright and his clothes dry, and was on hand at one of the docks to try to earn his breakfast by carrying the baggage of some incoming passenger, or by piloting such a one to the place he desired to find, if a stranger.

Bob's income was chiefly derived from this source.

On this particular morning he did not appear to be very fortunate; but, leaving him for a time, let us form a new acquaintance.

The forenoon was well advanced when an old man, wearing a semi-sailor garb and sporting a wooden leg, came walking stiffly down one of the paths to the Park in the direction of the sea wall.

Finally he reached a bench that faced the water, and there sat down.

Taking from his pocket a telescope of medium size, he carefully wiped the lenses and as carefully adjusted it.

Having done these two things to his evident satisfaction, he applied the telescope to his eye and took a searching survey of the harbor and bay, as if in quest of some particular craft.

Not a vessel escaped his observation, and

while he looked he kept muttering to himself various exclamations, such as—"Ah! Um! Ha! Ho-ho! Sure enough!" and the like. And his survey was not a brief one, but one which he kept up, evidently having pleasure in it.

Many of the benches were occupied, and by the time this old man had been there half an hour most of them were full.

His own was the only exception.

Presently three men came along and dropped down upon this bench, as far from the old sailor as the length of the seat would allow.

One of the trio wore a slouch hat, and was a man to draw attention in an Eastern city, having long hair that rested upon his shoulders and gave him the smack of the far West.

He was not bad-looking, had a pair of keen, black eyes, and was well dressed. He wore a chin whisker and mustache, something after the style of a Southerner, and an expert in types would have set him down for a sport, perchance gambler, of the Mississippi.

The other two were ordinary fellows, but who did not appear to be residents in the metropolis. They, too, had the savor of the West, but not in so striking a degree as the first mentioned.

They fell immediately into conversation.

At first the old sailor did not pay any attention to what they were saying, but finally his eye wandered from the telescope and seemed to be rolling in quest of nothing, and his ear to cock up in the attitude of listening to what was passing.

"And you say you dumped him?" asked he of the long hair.

"So we did," answered one of the others. "He's food for the sharks long before this time, you bet!"

"Served him right, too, but take care how you talk, for that old cock there may have sharp ears. Wait a minute, and I'll see whether he is keen on the hear or not."

"I say, Uncle?"

The old salt had heard every word, for his ears were unusually good.

He made never a move to answer, but wiped his glass preparatory to another survey of the harbor.

"I say, Uncle?" this time in quite a loud key.

The old sailor turned his head and looked at the speaker inquiringly, and after a momentary pause, asked:

"Did you speak to me?"

He put his hand behind his ear, very much as a deaf man would.

"Yes, I spoke to you. We were wondering which way the tide is moving. Can you settle the question?"

"The tide?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is nigh about flood, now, I take it, sir," was the information given.

"Thank you, sir."

"You are jest as welcome as kin be, sir."

The old salt finished wiping his glass and applied it to his eye again.

"As deaf as a badger," sneered the Westerner, in a tone of disgust, and in a slightly louder tone than he had used before.

"Yes, nothin' to fear from him, that's sure. But, 'bout the paper; was it the one you wanted?"

"Yes, that was the one, Joe."

"Then we have done our work."

"You have, and well."

"Then our pay is due."

"You shall have it. But, first, there is another matter I want to talk to you about."

"You won't never have a better chance, pardner. Talk right out, an' if it is anything in the way of business, you kin 'pend on us, every time."

"Well, it is something in the way of business, and there is money in it, too, Dan. But, here, you may as well be paid for what

you have done already, I suppose. I deal on the square."

He of the long hair drew out a wad of bills and counted out a sum for each of the men.

They received it with all eagerness, and were then more than eager for his further scheme.

"Now I'll tell you what it is," continued the Westerner, putting away his money, managing to display the butt of a revolver in doing so. "There is a certain man in this town who must be removed, some way or other."

"You have only got to say who and how, Gibson."

"Hist! take care how you mention my name. I am not going to say how it is to be done. If you could ship him for Australia, that would do pretty well."

"He would come back."

"He must be sent in such a manner that there will be no come back."

"That's more to the p'int. Now we know jest what you mean. You have only to name the man and the figger."

"The figure will be a hundred each for you, and the name of the man is John Barr. Can you remember that name? At present he is a prisoner, and will remain such till we deliver him to you."

"Who is We?"

"No matter, so long as you get your money."

"Well, that's so. But, you know we ain't quite to home here in this big city, pard."

"What has that to do with it?"

"It will be a ticklish job, for we may fetch up against a police snag."

"That is your lookout."

"Then, we don't know the man."

"You have seen him."

"When?"

"Last night. He was with the girl."

"Oh! that feller? Well, we kin take keer of him, I ruther opine."

"Then I shall look no further. Take this card, and be at this address at one o'clock in the morning."

"Number —, — street," the fellow read aloud.

"Yes; but, don't lose the card, for your memory may play you false. You will not fail to be on hand?"

"Nary a fall, pardner. When Joe Fink an' Dan Huston says they'll be at a place, by Larry they're goin' to be thar or bu'st their b'iler a-tryin'!"

"That is all for the present. You want to keep straight to-day, or you will be of no use for the undertaking. If you turn up with a jag on, you will not get the job, that's all."

"Don't you worry about that, pardner."

"And take care that the police don't get onto you for your last night's bit of business."

"We dodged the police all right, you bet. If one had mounted us, he would have got the same dose, you kin bet."

"Well, so-long. I guess our uncle here is going to buy the harbor, the way he is inspecting it. Ha! ha!"

And with a jerk of his thumb toward the old salt, the villainous Westerner went away.

The others took their departure a few minutes later.

CHAPTER VI.

BATTERY BOB POSTED.

"CARRY away my jib-tops'l," muttered the old sailor, as he closed up his telescope with a snap, "if thare ain't a nigger stow-away aboard this craft som'rs; I kin swear to it. Wonder who the lubber was they cast overboard? I kalkylate this here is a case fer Bobby."

He braced his wooden leg and got up,

with an effort, and that accomplished, went stepping and stumping away.

"I must find that boy," he said to himself, further. "He is as keen as anybody I know fer sech work, and I'll bet he will find out what is at the bottom of all this. The way he has helped the police already makes me believe he is goin' to be the makin' of a great detective, some of these days, and if I kin help him along I'll do it, true's my name is Jack Tarr."

From one walk the old man turned into another, and finally he approached a stand near one of the pillars of the Elevated Road, behind which sat an elderly woman of considerable avoirdupois.

"Good-morning, Betsy Sokup!" he greeted her, with a semi-salute.

"Good-morning, to you, Jack Tarr!" was the response. "I hope you are well to-day."

"I am quite well, I thank you," the rejoinder. "I hope it is the same with you. Have you seen Bobby this morning?"

"There, now, Jack Tarr, you take the words right out of my mouth. I was just going to ask you if you had seen him. I wonder where he has gone off to now?"

"That is hard to say, Betsy Sokup. He is a lively boy, is Bobby, and you can't bet on his bein' in one place more'n one minute at one time, I vow. But, I want to see him bad, just now."

"And what for?"

"To put detective work in his hands."

"Poo-foo!" disdainfully. "Are you crazy, Jack Tarr?"

"I should hope not, Betsy Sokup. You won't deny that Bobby is smart?"

"No, that's so; but I'm afraid he isn't half as smart as he thinks he is, betwixt you an' me an' the post."

"Don't you go for to run him down to me, Betsy Sokup, for I won't listen to it if you do, not one word. I'd sooner trust Bobby 'n a policeman, any day."

"But, he is only a boy."

"With the makin' of a big man in him."

"If he don't get killed runnin' his nose in to danger."

"Oh—ho! that is where it is, I guess; you are afeerd for him, Betsy."

"Well, I won't deny; an' you had orter be ashamed, to come here to run him into more."

"He'll be in it anyhow, Betsy Sokup, so what's the difference? But, layin' that aside for a minnit, have you changed your mind yet?"

"Not a bit, Jack Tarr. I tell you plain as I've said afore—I don't object to you, but to marry a wooden leg I never have an' I never will if you are the last man on earth."

The old salt heaved a sigh that sent his head to nodding.

"Now, then, what's the matter here?" chimed in a cheery young voice at that moment, and Battery Bob bobbed into view.

"I know by your puckered lips, Betsy, and by your sad face an' noddin' head, Jack, that you have been bringing up the old question again."

"It wasn't me as done it," declared the candy-and-cakes woman, earnestly.

"No, but it is you that keeps holdin' off, though," reminded the old sailor. "You know that I am willin' enough, Betsy."

"Yes, I know you are, Jack; you are only too willin'; but, there is your wooden leg, and marry a wooden leg I never will as long as the world stands, so that is all there is—"

"Here, now, cut it short, you two!" ordered Battery Bob. "I'm goin' to take this thing in hand myself."

"You?"

"You?"

From each of them.

"Yes, me. You only keep on higglin' about it, and you won't never come any nearer to a bargain. Now, don't you mention it

again, neither of you, till I give you leave, an' you see if I can't make a match of it."

"Not with a wood—"

"Cork right up, now, Betsy, and not another word out of you about a wooden leg. I am down on my luck this mornin', and haven't had a thing to eat so far. If you would lend me a cake or two till the bank opens you will do me a favor that won't soon be forgot—"

"Land of goodness, hold your tongue! Here, take 'em, and eat your fill. I allus tell you you are welcome."

"Yes, I know; but you know I'd never think of takin' a single one without askin' first. You are the best woman on earth, Betsy Sokup, and Jack Tarr knows it."

"As trim a craft as I ever set eyes on," the old salt heartily coincided at once. "Jest about old enough to be stanch and firm in every jint an' timber, an' as steady as the stars."

The old sailor did not know how to pay any higher compliment.

"Go along, the both of ye!" the candy-and-cakes woman cried, actually blushing. "I don't want to hear another word out of you."

"Yes, we'll go, Betsy," said Jack Tarr.

"Come along, Bobby, fer I want to see you very p'tic'lar. I have got a case of villainy as black as a pirate flag fer you to work out."

"Hello! if that's the case, Jack, I am with you to the boots. Come along, and we'll have a chatter over it. But, I have got my hands and hair about as full of detective business now as they kin hold. No matter, a pint or two more won't kill, I guess."

Bidding good-by to the candy-and-cakes woman, they walked off together and found a seat.

"Now, Jack, what is it?" asked Battery Bob.

"First, what is far more important to me, lad, do you mean what you said?"

"What I said?"

"'Bout me an' Betsy."

"Oh! Why, yes, sure; you just leave it to me, Jack, and see if I don't fetch it out all right for you. Now, what is the case you have got for me to work out?"

"Villainy, lad, villainy as deep as the roll-in' sea."

"That's the stuff; that's what I was born for, I guess, to pitch into villainy of every sort, kind, an' condition."

"I know it, lad, an' there is the makin' of a great man in you, I am sure, if you sail by chart an' compass all your young days. There's a murder goin' to be done this night."

"Whew!"

"Yes, lad, a cold, horrible murder."

"Well, mebbey there won't, if you can give me some p'int to work on."

"And I likely can do that, lad."

"You say it is to come off this night, 'cordin' to programme?"

"This very night."

"What time, Jack?"

"When the clock p'int about nor'east by nor, lad."

"What time's that?"

"Two bells, second watch, Bobby."

"Well, if that ain't one way to tell time!"

"That is to say, about one o'clock, lad."

"Then why didn't you say one o'clock an' be done with it?"

"Force o' habit, Bobby. A old salt like me can't be expected to gabble landlubber lingo like men as never sniffed the briny spray."

"No, I s'pose not; but, s'pose you try keepin' on one tack, now, fer a brief while an' let me into this great mystery that is startin' the sweat on your wooden leg an' makin' your burden heavy."

"Bobby, Bobby! Was there ever such a boy?"

"I don't know, Jack, not havin' lived only this once; but, what is this case? I'm dyin' to know all about it."

"Then I'll make haste to tell ye, lad."

And this the old salt proceeded to do, in the most roundabout manner that can be imagined. It would weary the reader to quote him.

Suddenly Battery Bob leaped to his feet.

"You say they chucked somebody in the water last night?" he cried.

"That was what I said, lad. They took a paper from him, an' then into the river he went."

"Jack Tarr, that somebody was me, yours truly, Battery Bob, Bob Dickery, Diekery Dock, or whatever you please; me, indyvidually, an' nobody else!"

"You don't mean it, lad!"

"Bet your wooden stumper I do, though, Jack! Oh! kawhoop! but you have got jest what I'm after, Jack, the clue to all this p'izen villainy, and if I don't marry you to Betsy Sokup it will be funny!"

CHAPTER VII.

BOB PLANTS THE SEED OF A SCHEME.

BATTERY BOB had leaped to his feet, and was executing a dance on the broad walk.

The face of the old sailor had become more serious immediately, if possible, at the mention of the possibility of his union with the woman of his desire.

"Bobby, set ye down here," he chided, "and don't be makin' a monkey of yourself. You are makin' everybody look this way, and if there is one thing I hate more'n another it is to be made a object of."

"You'll have to 'scuse me this time, Jack," the boy declared. "I am almost overcome with delerious delight at the prospect of bringin' these rantankerous rascals up with a round turn in the sweet by and by. Bet your wooden prop there will be a time in the near henceward!"

"Yes, yes, I hope so, too; but, do you think it will ever be possible, Bobby, iad?"

"Possible? Bless your old soul, Jack, it is as good as done already! If I don't run them into a trap and capture the whole b'ilin' of 'em, you can put me up at auction fer a smoked herrin' an'—"

"No, no, no; I am talkin' about Betsy Sokup. Do you—"

"Oh! I see. Why, yes, that's possible, Jack. I'm goin' to make it work, you bet. I'll have you prancin' around in matrimonial harness before you know it. All I ask of you is to stand off from Betsy awhile and have little to say to her; be a little coldish as it were, and—"

"I couldn't do that, Bobby, really—"

"You have got to, that's all. That's a part of my plan. See? You do as I say, and I'll fetch you out all right. But, that must be put on the shelf for the present, for I have more weighty business on hand jest now than match-makin', you bet! Go ahead, now, and tell me that whole business over again, only cut out the ands and so forths."

"Well, I hope you will, Bobby, I hope you will, and I'll do as you say, if I must. Let's see, where did I leave off?"

"Where they took a paper from me an' fired me into the river. But, I want it all over again, right from the start. See? This is the trail I am on, and I don't want to lose a single p'int."

So the old salt went over the story again, but this time more briefly and to the point, and in due time Battery Bob was in possession of all the facts in the case so far as the old man knew them. And, adding this to what he knew before, Bob began to see daylight.

It was a daylight with a good deal of mist and fog, however, as yet.

"Jack, I'll be there, you can bet your telescope!" the boy cried, when the old sailor had done. "I'll be there, or lose a button tryin', and if there ain't a dose o' physic in

their little game it will be 'cause I can't put it there. See? I'll be the dose, too, and don't you forget it. I have got it in for them fellers, big as a fire-hoss."

"They deserve it, Bobby, they deserve it."

"And they'll get it, yes, they'll get it, where the chicken got the ax," the young dock-rat sung, merrily, as he moved away.

Bob returned to the stand of the cakes-and-candy woman, to find her in something akin to a towering rage.

"Why, what's the matter, Betsy?" he asked.

"Matter enough, matter enough," was the snapped response. "I'm bein' robbed, that's what's the matter."

"Robbed?"

"Yes, robbed! and that right before my very face an' eyes, too. Do ye see this broken cookie, Bobby? Do you see it? What kin I do with half a oookie, I would ask ye?"

"Give it to me, Betsy."

"Well, take it, an' welcome; but that don't mend the fact that I'm bein' robbed, an' I have stood it as long as I'm a-goin' to, too."

"Who is the robber, Betsy? I'll try my detective talent—"

"You are a goose, that's what you are, a good-for-nothing, silly goosel! Who would the robber be, but the policemen, hang 'em—that there Terrence McDougal in p'tic'lar."

"What? Terry around this mornin'?"

"Yes; he is on split-trick to-day. And this makes just seventy nine cents the police owes me, and never a penny of it will I receive, and Terrence McDougal is the worst of the lot. Every time he comes along he must take a cake or a candy, or a piece of one, and what kin I do?"

"You need a protector, Betsy, that's what's the matter. Now if you only had Jack Tarr for your husband—"

"Don't you mention no Jack Tarr to me just now, I warn ye, fer I am in no mood to hear it. And with a wooden leg—never, no, never! I'll go unprotected all my days first!"

"But, Betsy, that wooden leg would come into play. Jack could remove it in a jiffy and lambaste a copper over the head in a way that would make him wish he belonged to the street-sweepin' brigade, and they wouldn't long monkey with your cakes and candy, I'll bet."

"You are a worse goose than I took you to be, Bobby, really. You are almost as bad as Jack Tarr himself."

"He's no goose, you bet, Betsy. He's a man of brain, is Jack Tarr, and I won't hear him run down, even if it is you. He's my friend, is Jack, every time, an' I will stand up fer him."

"Yes, yes, I know he is, Bobby; I didn't mean it."

"But, Terry has got to leave your cakes alone, if I have to take a fall out of him myself. You don't like him a bit, do you, Betsy?"

"Like him? I hate the very buttons on his coat! Anybody that will steal a cookie from a poor widdy-woman is nothin' but a common thief, an' if I dared I'd like to tell him so to his face."

"But you do like me a little, Betsy?"

"Well, well, you are the worst goose I ever did see! Of course I like you, Bobby."

"And you wouldn't want to see Terry McDougal beat me at anything, now would you?"

"Bobby Dickery, I'd give every candy and cake I've got in stock before I'd see any thing like that."

"I thought so; but, I have got a bet on with Terry, and I am afraid he is goin' to win in spite of everything. Guess I'm done up, this time."

"A bet?"

"Yes, I bet him that you and Jack Tarr would get married, some day, an' he bets you never will; and as you are determined to

stand off the way you do, it looks as if he would beat me."

"Serves you right, that's all. Serves you jest right. Haven't I said many's the time that I wouldn't never marry no wooden leg? What was you thinkin' about, anyhow, Bob Dickery?"

"I thought maybe you would get over your 'bjection—"

"Never, long as the world stands. If Jack hadn't no wooden leg, then I'd marry him for the askin'; but as it is—"

She shook her head.

"Then it is all up with my bet, and Terry wins."

"It serves you right, for you knowed he was bettin' on a sure thing. But, if Jack hadn't no wooden leg—"

"No use talkin, about it any further, Betsy; my bet is in the soup, you bet, and the policeman that steals your cakes is going to win and I am going to lose. No use cryin—"

"I only wish—"

"Don't mention it, Betsy, I beg of ye. It was my own fault, an' I don't blame you. Say no more about it. Say, has any young lady been here askin' for me this mornin'?"

"Young lady?"

"Nice young lady, good-lookin' an' right up to date."

"No, there ain't been none sich here, Bobby. What in the world do you have to do with a young lady?"

"And there ain't none sech to come, like this one, you bet, Betsy. Gave her my 'dress last night, and she said she'd call around and see me some time. If she does come, put her on my track, will ye?"

"Of course I will, if you tell me where you will be."

"I'll be 'long the docks all day, and if she don't sight me at one she will at another."

"All right, Bobby; I'll tell her, if she comes; but I'm 'clined to believe it is only some of your fooling; there is so much nonsense 'bout you."

"No foolin' this time, Betsy; I mean business, from boots to hat. She'll be here, sure as shootin', an' when she comes you just put her on my track and I'll be a heap obliged to you."

CHAPTER VIII.

BOB DIVES STILL DEEPER.

BATTERY BOB went off whistling in the direction Terrence McDougal had gone, and presently sighted that gentleman.

"Hello, Terry, what are you doin' around this time o' day?" he demanded, in his cheery way. "You are a night owl, and you ought to be in bed sleeping at the rate of 'steen knots an hour."

"Hal is it you, Bobby? Bad luck to it all, my b'y, it is the dirty split-trick Oi am doing, and Oi wish the devil might fly away wid it. It breaks a man all up, to lose his rest loike this and have his meals all mixed up so that he don't know where he's at."

"That's so, I s'pose. Have a bite o' cake, Terry?"

He offered the half he had just received at the hands of Betsy Sokup.

"Yes, Oi don't mind, Bobby, b'y. Where did ye get it? From Betsy Sokup, Oi be bound."

"You are right. I lifted it as I came along, seein' it was only a half, but I don't care for it. If I did you wouldn't get it."

"Oi bel'ave ye, Bobby. Oi'll bet it is the half of one Oi took meself as Oi came along there a few minutes ago. The old woman has good cakes, on me soul she does. Oi like 'em."

"And she ain't stingy about 'em, not a bit, either. I think it pleases her to have 'em sampled by the finest, Terry."

"She never says a wurred whin Oi take wan, anyhow, if that is a sign."

"What more do you want?"

Battery Bob joked with the officer for a time, and then parting company with him, went on his way to one of the docks where a boat was about due to land.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he went laughing to himself. "I have got my scheme working in great shape now, sure enough. Didn't know there was so much plannin' in my punkin. I bet there will be a weddin' before the moon wanes."

And he laughed again, very plainly tickled over something he considered to be a huge joke.

It was an hour later when a young woman accosted him, as he was loitering on the dock of the Long Branch boats.

"Is this Robert Dickery?" she asked, laying a hand on his shoulder.

"Robert Dickery, Esquire; yes, ma'm, that's me, every day in the week an' all day Sunday," Bob answered.

"You know me?"

"Funny if I wouldn't; you are Edith Allen that was—Mrs. John Barr that is. Oh, yes, I know you fast enough."

"Hal that is proof that you found what you set out to look for. Where is the paper? Give it to me, and I will reward you, my little man."

Bob drew a rather wry face at this intended compliment—calling him a little man. There was something about that phrase that sounded babyish to his plebeian ears, and he did not relish it.

"Please don't call me that again, if you want to pull stroke with me, ma'm," he gave notice. "I don't like to be little-manned by anybody. Had rather you would call me Battery Bob, straight from the shoulder. That's the name I am floatin' to the breeze."

The young woman laughed.

"All right, Battery Bob; I'm glad you told me," she said. "I won't offend you again in like manner. But, the paper?"

"Thereby hangs a tale."

"What?"

"I want to chin with ye a little 'bout that very dockymment, ma'm," said Bob, seriously. "I want to see where the light-house stands, before I go a sailin' too far out from shore."

"What in the world can you mean?"

"Let's go over here an' sit down, an' I'll tell you. Folks will think you are waitin' for friends by the boat, so it will be all right. Needn't be 'shamed to be seen in my company."

Bob led the way with all confidence to a baggage truck that was standing idle, and the young woman had nothing to do but follow.

She joined him and there was nothing out of the usual about her conduct; so no one noticed her particularly.

"Now, tell me," she requested.

"Well, I got the paper."

"I knew that, when you called me Mrs. Barr. That is now my name."

"And I knowed it when I got the paper. That is all straight, so far. Now, who is this John Barr?"

"My husband, of course."

"I'll score one to your credit, a'm. What I mean is, what kind of a man is he?"

"Really, you must tell me what you are driving at, Battery Bob. You can't expect me to answer your questions unless you do."

"We'll come to an understandin' by 'n' by. I take it you don't know where your hubby is. Is that straight? Have I got the right hawser over the right post this throw?"

"Mercy, but I don't know what you are talking about. It is true that I do not know where Mr. Barr is, however. Do you know?"

"That's jest what I'm ta-kin' about; yes, I know where he is."

"Then tell me."

"And what will you do?"

"Go to him."
 "Then you have got over the suicide blues?"

"Yes, yes."
 "That's right; a person ought to stop a week an' think about it before goin' an' doin' it right off on the jump."

"But, that paper?"
 "You have told your mammy all about it, I take it, eh?" ignoring her question still further. "And she has forgave ye and tooken ye to her heart and loved ye same as ever, eh?"

"How could you guess so much?"
 "By addin' up the sum an' strikin' the balance," declared Bob, carelessly.

"What an odd fellow you are. But, now, are you ready to give me the paper you have found?"

"I'd never be more ready in my life, ma'm, and jest as willin' as ready, too; but the fact of the business is, I haven't got it."

"What, not got it?"

"Jes' so."

"Then where is it?"

"Give it up—same as I did the docky-ment."

"You gave it up?"

"That's what I done—'cause why, couldn't help myself. Two men pounced down on to me and swiped it, and then they took me an' pitched me into the river. Oh, we had a lively time, and I was right in it while the fun lasted."

"Good heavens! Then it has fallen into the hands of Charles Turney."

"Hello, that's a new name. Who is he?"

"My cousin."

"Feller with long hair, chin whiskers and mustache—not both on his chin, though."

"No, no; but, I have seen that man; who is he?"

"Thought he might be your cousin under a false name. They call him Gibson, if I have got it straight, an' I s'pose I have. You can bet your life that I'll Gib him, when I get him on my trolley."

The young woman laughed outright, at the boy's earnest manner and his quaint expression.

"You kin laugh," Bob declared, "but I mean it."

"I don't doubt but you do. It seems strange that you should get so concerned in this affair."

"Does it? Well, it don't to me. When I rescue beauty in distress, I want to know somethin' 'bout the p'tic'lars; an' when two p'izen peppers pitches me into the river, you kin bet your—your pocket-handkerchief that I am goin' to get concerned in their affairs might lively."

The young woman laughed again.

"But, can't you tell me more about the matter?" Bob asked. "Want to know the whole story, now that I have got some of it, and if I don't make them fellers dance to my tune it will be 'cause I can't whistle, that's all. They are figgerin' on throwin' John Barr into the river to-night, and I am goin' to put a spoke in their wheel in that game, you bet!"

"Heavens! you must tell the police what you know! This must not happen! I will reward you well, if you will only tell me where he is. And that paper—you must get it again and restore it to me. I will give you twenty dollars if you can do it. Do you think you can? But, tell me where John Barr is, please."

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW CHARACTER APPEARS.

BATTERY BOB took off his hat and scratched his head.

"I'll go fer that sawbuck," he declared, "like a hungry bass after a bait; but I don't hardly please to tell you where Barr is. We'll bar that for the present, if it is all the same to you—or whether it is or not."

"What do you mean by sawbuck?"

"The twenty dollars—the double-X, of course."

"Yes, you must find the paper. But, why will you not tell me where Mr. Barr is?"

"You would go to the police, or rush to the place, and you might get into some such a fix yourself, or they might spirit the man away and that would be the last of him."

"The police could stop them."

"Mebby so, but the finest don't allus hit the mark they aim at, either. An' then, too, it would give the rascals warnin' and then they would pick up and dust out 'fore anything could be done to stop 'em."

"You think so?"

"Sure as tar an' pitch. You let me play them, an' if I don't land 'em it will be 'cause my name ain't spelt right, that's all."

"Well, if you will not tell, that settles it, I suppose. But you must get the paper and rescue the man at all hazard. You seem like a smart boy, and I have no doubt you see your way clear."

"Oh, yes, jest as clear as mud."

"Then, if you are not sure of the way, why don't you tell the police what you know?"

"The police are too smart for me, 'ceptin' Terry McDougal. On the other hand, why don't you tell me what you know? That would brush the clouds away a good deal, I'm bettin'."

"I cannot tell."

"Why?"

"We are going to keep it a secret, if that be possible. And, maybe we can do it if you can restore that lost paper to me. Did I say I would give you fifty dollars?"

"I kin get it jest as quick fer fifty as I kin fer twenty."

"Well, get it, and it shall be fifty dollars instead of twenty. The record of my marriage must be destroyed, utterly."

"Whew! Well, now, if this don't beat all I have run up against in a spell of while, I'll eat my hat. Whoever heard tell of a new-made bride like you payin' fifty dollars fer a certiffyked jest to destroy it."

"That is what must be done in this case, and it must be done by my own hand. It is a strange case, you have well said."

"Should say it was. Beats Betsy Sokup's cookies all holler."

"Are they strange cases?"

"You are gettin' too smart fer me, now, ma'm, an' mebbly we had better part company fer a time. When I find out anything 'portant I'll drop around an' see you. If you want me, you know where to come."

"Yes, but that old woman may not always know where you are."

"If she don't nobody else will, that is sure, so that's the best 'dress I kin furnish."

"Very well, I will trust you. I have great confidence in you, after the manner in which you saved my life last night, and so quickly found out who I was."

"That was nothin', a blind man could have done all that. But, did you really mean to let 'er go when you made that run fer the river? Was you goin' to do the suicide act fer fair?"

"I certainly mean it, Battery Bob."

"You have changed your mind."

"Yes; I must live."

"Then it couldn't 'a' been a very serious case, I take it. Wish you would tell me all about it."

"Which I cannot do. That is a secret that must be kept, for the present at any rate, and I trust to you to help me in the keeping of it."

"Bushel basket! how kin I keep what I haven't got? You tell me all about it, and then I'll help you keep it hard and fast enough, you bet your—your bangs on that, fair lady."

The young woman had to laugh again in spite of herself at Bob's inimitable manner.

"No, no; I meant that you should keep

the secret that I tried to take my life, you see," she explained.

"Oh! I'm doin' that, ma'm. There was Terry McDougal, he wanted to get onto it, but I told him it wouldn't work that way."

"That was right. You keep the secret, and aid me all you can, and you will lose nothing by it in the end. Above all, get hold of that paper, and quickly."

"I'm after it, you bet! Meantime don't you get no more suicide blues, for mebbly Battery Bob won't be around to perform the grand rescue act, and you will be a sure-enough goner."

"Have no fear, Bob. I was almost crazed and beside myself at what I had done, and that was my first thought and the only escape I saw. It was wild, foolish, but I was not myself; my mind was not my own at the time— But, there, you can't understand."

"Bound to discount my understandin', are you?"

"Oh, no; but—"

There came an interruption at that moment.

The expected boat had arrived while they were talking, and had made fast and was discharging her passengers.

Neither Bob nor the young woman had paid any attention, Bob being too eager to learn more of the mystery to care whether he earned his dinner or not, and the young woman being deeply interested.

Among the landing passengers was a young man, who, chancing to glance at the young lady on the truck, stopped short with a look of surprise.

He looked for a moment, as if to make sure, then advanced quickly and exclaimed;

"Miss Allen!"

This was the interruption.

The young woman looked up quickly, and her face flushed.

"Oh! it is you, Mr. Alexander?" she said.

"You quite startled me, speaking so suddenly."

"Yes, it is I, just returned from Long Branch, Edith. But, pray, what are you doing here and in such company as this?" with a look at Battery Bob.

"Reckon that refers to me," spoke up Bob, spiritedly.

"Well, yes," the young man admitted.

"It's all right," Bob mildly added. "The lady won't make any improvement if she changes me for you, that's sure."

"What's that, you young scamp? Do you mean to say you are my equal? Why, I have a strong notion to pull your nose for you. I would, but it would soil my glove, you imp!"

"I guess you'd have a stronger notion to let go, if you tried it on," declared Bob, in a grim way. "If I'm not good enough company for you, you just trot right along; me an' the lady was gettin' on all right, and I don't need none of your help to entertain her."

The young lady laughed merrily.

"You had better give it up, Harvey," she said. "This boy is an honest lad who has done me a real service, and I am much indebted to him. You must not quarrel with Battery Bob, or you will have to answer to me."

"Oh, if that is the case, I beg your pardon, young sir," said the dude, addressing Bob. "A service to this lady is one to me, and I, too, must thank you."

"You needn't go to no trouble to do it," rejoined Bob.

"But, Edith, what are you doing here?" asked the young man, paying no further attention to Bob.

"Why, I came here to meet a friend, and have been talking with this boy, after thanking him for the service. He found my card-case and restored it to me. He is good company."

"And you have seen your friend?"

"Yes, and was about to return home. Are you going up-town?"

"Yes, and will be delighted if I may accompany you. I am really glad to have met you."

"Don't mention it. Well, good-by, Battery Bob."

"Good-by, Miss Allen," Bob responded.

He called her by that name, having noticed that she did not correct the young man for so doing.

They went off together, and Battery Bob stood looking after them with his hands in his pockets and his lips ready pursed for a whistle.

The whistle, however, did not come, though Bob watched the couple till they were out of sight. Then he unpuckered, winked his eye, and set forth to earn his promised reward.

CHAPTER X.

BOB HOT ON THE SCENT.

HARVEY ALEXANDER, hey?" said Bob to himself, as he walked away. "I have froze to that name, even if it is a hot day, and I will hold fast to it, too, you bet. Mister Alexander, I don't know jest where you figger in this game, yet, but, I don't like the set of your sail and I wouldn't stand long 'bout tellin' you so either, if it came to that. I have got my awful eye on you."

Battery Bob shook his head emphatically, just as if talking to some other person.

"Don't jest know where your part comes in," he went on. "Strikes me mebbly you ain't got no business in the play, but have got on the stage by accident, somehow. I hope you will kindly somehow get off again, if that is the case; don't want any more on my hands 'n I have to have, certain. What with savin' suercides, and findin' lost property, and huntin' out rogues, and makin' matter-o'-money-al matches, don't know where I'll fetch up."

Bob still had the address he had learned from Jack Tarr.

In fact, he never lost anything that he stored away in his rememberer—as he called it.

This was the place where John Barr was held a prisoner, and it was here the chief villain was likely to be found, sooner or later, and he was the man Bob wanted to tackle.

Not that the boy saw his way clear, for he didn't; it was all a puzzle.

The place to which the address called him was not the most elegant quarter of the great city, by any means.

In truth, it was a street that was not held in good repute, and on his arrival the Dock Detective found that the number did not discover a house which one might feel proud or anxious to enter.

"That's a hard hole, and I know it," Bob said to himself. "Know it jest as well as if I was a prisoner there myself. If that is where you are, John Barr, I bet you are in a bad fix. Queer, all around. Who is John Barr? Is he a villain? or is he straight goods?"

Bob scratched his head, and evidently gave it up.

While he was looking and thinking, a man came out of the house—a man with long hair and a slouch hat.

"Hillo! I know you, Mister Gibson," Bob immediately exclaimed under his breath, at sight of him. "Would know you in the dark, by that hair and hat, from what Jack Tarr said."

The man paused on the step for a moment, looking up and down the street; but, as there were other boys on the street at the time, no notice was taken of the dock-delegate.

After looking, the man left the house and walked down the street.

He had been gone but a moment when Bob tried the door of the house, and finding it fast, set forward to follow the man.

"Didn't s'pose I would get in," he said to himself, "but no harm tryin'. I would have let the rooster gone, if I'd found that door unfastened, and tried my hand at gettin' John Barr out of his state of tribblyashun. That's all right, though, and as this rooster is my game I'll go gunnin' for him."

So, he kept the long-haired man in sight. The Bowery was not a great distance off, and the man was soon on that great thoroughfare.

It is noticeable that when a Westerner comes to town, that is to say, one of the type of the men here under consideration, the Bowery is pretty certain to be one of his haunts—in fact, is likely to become his favorite resort. There is something homogeneous, and there is something about the Bowery, generally, that reminds him of home. It is something like the main thoroughfare of a successful mining-camp, only on a grander scale.

The Bowery had already caught Owen Gibson.

He turned into a popular garden, with the easy swagger of his native wilds, and looked around.

Battery Bob was not far away, piping him.

Seeing a vacant table, the man walked over to it and gave an order for something to drink and some cigars.

These were furnished and paid for, and with his broad hat set back from his forehead the man lighted a cigar and proceeded to make himself comfortable.

Here it was cool and refreshing, a band was playing, at intervals a girl or man would appear and sing some popular ditty of the day, and the gambler-sport was in high delight—for gambler-sport he was.

Battery Bob, had, meantime, edged into the room, and at last had worked his way out of sight behind a growing cedar in a huge tub directly behind this man's chair.

An hour and more passed.

The man drank only lightly, but he smoked continuously, and occasionally he applauded a song.

Finally, at the end of that time, another man came and joined him, having looked around on entering until he caught sight of the Westerner in his corner.

The new-comer was a man younger in years than the other, but he had a look of dissipation that made him look older than he really was, and his clothing had a rather gone-to-seed look.

He dropped upon a chair in a tired way.

"Well?" he demanded.

As he made the demand, he filled a glass—two had been provided—and drained it at one draught.

"Everything works nicely," was the response. "Take another, Charley, and put a little life into yourself. You look down in the mouth, to-day, [and you want to brace up."

"Enough to make anybody look that way, ain't it?"

He took another drink the same as the first, after which he shoved the glass and bottle back out of reach, almost.

"Why, my boy," cried the gambler sport, "we are on the high road to success, now. Only a few weeks more and that fair cousin of yours will be of age, and then you will step into a handsome fortune."

"Have my doubts about it."

"Why?"

"Well, since Barr has flunked like he has."

"I am going to take care of Barr, and don't you forget it," was whispered. "You will hear of a widow in the land before the moon is old."

"That will be your own doings, then; I am not into anything like that, and I want it understood so," and with clinched fist, the younger man spoke with somewhat of force.

"You have no part in that, nor have I,"

was the rejoinder. "That is another deal altogether."

"And what then?"

"Well, to fasten the proof of that marriage."

"And you can do that?"

"You bet!"

"How, since you have lost the certificate?"

"Ha, ha! That has been my work of the morning, to get that paper back again, or to get hold of it, since I did not lose it myself."

"And you got it?"

For answer, the gambler took the paper from his pocket and displayed it, greatly to the delight of the watchful Battery Bob.

"You see for yourself," Gibson said. "Now, all that remains is to establish this proof in the right way while the thing is still warm, but very quietly, and that will be all."

"But, you won't have Barr, if he must be put out of the way."

"He will meet with an accident, and will be found and identified, and that will be the more proof."

"Suppose the girl denies it, though?"

"She can't, when there were witnesses to the marriage. Then, here is the biggest bit of proof of all. She can't get over this document, you see, and it will be a big stroke to have it found in Barr's pocket!"

"Why?"

"Can't you see? The reporters will get hold of it, and the newspapers will be full of the sensation. Then, that will place the matter right, and Barr will be taken home to the residence of his bride and let her deny it if she can. Oh, I am a thinker."

"Should say you was. Then where do I come in?"

"You will come in from the West, put in your claim, and will come in for all the wealth; that's where you'll come in."

"I'd rather see it than hear tell of it."

"You'll never see it, if I kin prevent," declared Battery Bob to himself, in his place of hiding. "Bob Dickery is in this game, my fine fellows, right up to his chin, you bet."

CHAPTER VI.

BATTERY BOB GETS NABBED.

BATTERY BOB had now heard enough to convince him of one thing—that the young woman he was trying to serve was in the right in the game—whatever it was.

Then, too, he had now heard enough else to give him some idea of the nature of the scheme on foot. A fortune was at stake, and these men were playing for it.

Of course, he could not grasp the whole situation yet, but he now knew he was on the right side, and he meant to make it the winning side if possible.

He still had some doubts about John Barr.

It was his intention to save the man's life, if that lay in his power, but whether he deserved his sympathy or not remained to be seen.

There could be no doubt but he had entered the scheme with these fellows in the beginning, but now, from what they said, he appeared to have changed his mind and wanted to draw out of their combine.

And this was to cost him his life.

But, not if Battery Bob could slip in his little joker, and he thought he could.

He was in it, as he declared himself, "right up to his chin," and he considered that deep enough for his purpose. If not—well, he was not afraid of plunging in head and ears.

"You will see it, never fear," the sport made rejoinder to the last quoted remark of his companion. "We hold the winning hand, and nothing can hinder us from raking the pile. I have been thinking of a place for us to locate."

"Why?"

"It will be better for us to be out of the

city, as soon as our work is done and in shape, while we wait for the time to act."

"Well?"

"I think we'll go to Long Branch. There is a game there, I hear, and I am anxious to tackle it for pastime."

"And what of me?"

"You need a place to brace up in, and I must see that you do it."

"You are generous, you are, after seeing to it that I have come almost to rags. But, go ahead."

"Now, now, that is hard talk, Charley. You never had a better friend than I have been to you, in spite of the big sum you are in my debt. And am I not paving the way for you to pay it?"

While speaking thus, Gibson had folded the paper he had in his hand and returned it to his pocket.

He did not, however, replace it in the pocket from which he had taken it, but thrust it in his hip pocket, which was the more conveniently reached in the position he was sitting.

Seeing this, a thrill passed through Battery Bob.

He meant to make an effort to get that paper, even if he got into trouble by so doing!

It would be a serious situation for him, if caught in the act, but he was fully convinced that the end justified the means, though he would not have expressed it in the same words.

When Gibson withdrew his hand, still talking, his coat caught over the butt of a revolver which he carried in the same pocket, and was there held, leaving the pocket exposed and the tip of the paper visible over the top! Still, it would be risky for Bob.

The dock-rat detective immediately reached forth his hand, from the cover of the tree behind which he crouched, leaning over the tub.

It was a corner of the room, as has been explained, and the table and the chairs had an excellent place.

"And when are you going to Long Branch?" asked Turney.

"I'm going to run down this afternoon and look at the place," was the response given.

"But you will be back to-night?"

"Possibly."

"And if you like it we'll go down tomorrow to stay?"

"Yes, till your cousin comes of age, and then the fun will begin; or, a few days after."

"You must give me some money, though."

"Not a dollar, Charley. I know your weakness, and if I give you money you will drink yourself into such shape that there will be no righting you. Remember, now, that you have promised to be guided by me in this."

"No, I won't drink a drop—"

"I know you too well, my boy. Not to be trusted. You have a place to stay, and everything has been paid for, so you are all right. As soon as the work is done you can go and drown yourself in jig-water, if you want to, but not now. You are under training, you see."

"And mighty rough training it is."

"Rough training is necessary, when you expect to win, no matter what kind of a match— What the— Ha!"

With a sudden break, Gibson had made a grab behind, at the same time half turning, and had seized the arm of Battery Bob, with the paper in his fingers.

Battery Bob was entirely unversed in the art of pocket-picking, and with all his care he had not been cunning enough to remove the marriage-certificate without betraying himself in the act.

Gibson had felt him at his work.

The gambler jerked the boy out over the tub, snatched the paper away from him, and his face was like a thunder-cloud.

"What do you mean by such work?" he hissed, but not loudly. "Who are you, and what did you try to take that paper for? Answer me, before I wring your neck for you!"

"I guess I made a mistake," said Bob, simply.

"Yes, I should say you did, dast you! Seems to me I have heard of you before, my fine fellow, and I think you will have to be taken care of. I have a place for you, and I'll take you to it, and if you kick I'll hand you over to the police for the pickpocket you are."

"Wish you would," said Bob. "They would send me up Salt Creek and I wouldn't have to worry about grub for a spell."

"What's the matter here?" asked a waiter, seeing what was taking place.

"I have a little account to settle with this lad, that's all," answered the gambler-sport.

"What's he been doing?"

"That don't matter; he knows and I know, and I'll see to him."

Gibson had risen from the table, still holding Bob by the wrist, and of course the lad was no match in strength for him.

In fact, he made no effort to struggle or get away. He had a hope that had sprung from certain words the gambler had uttered, and was willing to go with him to the place he had suggested.

Bob thought it might be the house where Barr was imprisoned.

He was taking the risk of his life, but he was a lad who had almost unlimited confidence in himself.

"Oh, it's all right, mister," he said, to the waiter. "This gent is my legal guardian, an' he is goin' to rake me over the coals, that's all. I'm in fer a-lickin' an' you will be in fer a bat in the eye if you interfere."

The gambler looked at Bob in surprise.

"That's about it," he fell in with the story. "I can take care of him, and there will be no disturbance here, sir."

"Oh, all right. Thought maybe he had been trying to rob you, or something."

"I'd deal with him in a different way if he had."

"No doubt of it, sir."

"Want any help?" here put in Turney.

"No, I can manage him. Take care of yourself till I see you again."

"Yes, I'll do that, seeing that I can't do anything else," was the rather sullen response.

Gibson did not rejoin, but marched Battery Bob out of the place, keeping a tight grip upon his arm so that it was impossible for Bob to break away.

"What did you tell that lie for?" he demanded, as soon as they were outside.

"To keep out of the hands of the p'lice," answered Bob. "If they knowed the facts there, they'd call 'em, and I'd be a goner. I reckon you only mean to 'ply a dose of foot-gear to me an' let me go."

"What gives you that idea, you young whelp?"

"Well, reckon you don't want to git too sociable with the police jest about this time, and if you interdoose me to 'em you'll have to, you bet! Shouldn't wonder if the best thing you kin do, Mister Man, would be to 'ply yer boot to me an' let me take a run."

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH THEY TALK SHARP.

THE Western sharp looked at the boy keenly, as if he would like to kill him on the spot.

"I ought to wring your neck for you," he grated. "You will come with me, and I'll show you what will happen to you. Who gives you the idea that I care for the police?"

He led Bob rapidly along as he spoke.

"That's a gen'ral impression that's got

fixed in my mind," Bob made answer, in a fearless manner. "If you git intimate with 'em, they might go to askin' p'inted questions. See?"

"You will see something pretty soon, curse you!"

"I see somethin' now."

"I'll show you something more. What did you want with that paper you took out of my pocket, anyhow?"

"Was in need of readin' matter, and thought I'd take a read out o' that while I waited. You wasn't usin' it just then, an' I didn't s'pose you would care. See? I am a great reader."

"And a great liar, too, by Judas!"

"Well, say, what's goin' to happen to me? I'm somewhat interested in this thing: myself, now."

"You will see what's going to happen, before you know it. I am going to know more about you and why you wanted that paper. There is something back of all this."

"Don't see how you are goin' to get any further back of it 'n me, anyhow," the boy retorted. "You have got my story, and if you won't believe that there won't be any use in your lookin' fer proof."

"We'll see about that."

"But, that don't answer my question."

"What question?"

"'Bout what you are goin' to do with me. You want to speak up, now, or I am going to yell perlice in a way that will split the welkin at both ends an' make it bulge out in the middle."

"You call the police if you dare, and—"

"That's what I am goin' to do, if you don't say quick. I'll have 'em down onto you like a host of cabmen."

"Don't you try it on, or by Judas I'll wring your neck for you! Don't think I am a man to be frightened by a snip of a boy, for I am not. The first yaup out of you will be your last."

"I give ye fair warnin', now, 'fore I let 'er go," warned Bob. "It is daylight an' we are in plain sight, an' you daresn't do anything to me here. I'm not to be scared by a long-haired gorilla like you, either, and don't you think so. Now, then, let go, quick!"

Bob had the best of the situation, and knew it.

He had been thinking the matter over, and had decided that it would never do to allow himself to be taken into that house.

Instead of making him a prisoner, as he had at first reasoned they would do, they might murder him at once and dispose of his body, and that would end for all time his chances.

The man dropped his arm.

"I thought you would," Bob quietly observed, still walking along with the fellow.

The man had been on the point of stopping, thinking no doubt that Bob would run immediately away, and this action rather amazed him.

"What do you mean by still coming with me?" he demanded.

"I want to have a chin with you, that's all."

"A chin?"

"A pow-wow. Savvy?"

"Then why did you object to my holding your arm?"

"Never seen a Texas steer get away in the streets of this little village, did ye, mister?"

"No."

"Well, I'm like a Texas steer. I'm jest as willin' to go as kin be, but you can't drive me worth a cent. When I kin go as I please I'll amble along without any trouble."

"You are a customer, you are!"

"Bet your hat on that!"

"What do you want to talk about?"

"I want to know what this game is against Miss Allen."

"Who is Miss Allen? What are you talkin' about? Are you clean daft?"

"That won't work, Mister Texas Jack, or whatever you are called at home. I am onto you as big as a fire-hoss."

"What won't work?"

"Your playin' off the innocent. You can't do it with me, that's sure as you carry a pistol. I know a thing or two, and you had better let me in with you, if you don't want me to squeal."

"Ha! now you are beginning to talk sense."

"Never talk anything else, when my mill is runnin'."

"What do you know?"

"That there is some bit of p'izen deviltry afoot."

"I don't admit it, but how much do you pretend to know of it, supposing there is."

"I heard all you and that bum Turney had to say."

"The deuce you did!"

"Sure."

"Then one thing or the other has got to be done in your case. You have got to come in with us, or be put so far out that you will never reach us."

"That's the way it looks, but fore I decide I want to know all about it."

"You know too much already."

"Oh, no; I can carry a good deal more an' never lay a hair. What will ye do with me if I come in?"

"We'll find work for you to do."

"And if I won't?"

"I have nothing to say. You have sense enough to understand the situation, I guess."

"Can't understand it unless somebody puts me on to it, that is a sure thing. There must be big money in it, from what I heard you an' Turney sayin', an' will I come in for a share of that?"

"Why, you confounded little imp! you talk as big as a man weighing two hundred!"

"Wouldn't be in it, if I couldn't talk these days."

"Well, let's go where we can talk."

"This suits me."

"It don't suit me, not worth a cent. Come to the place where I lodge, and I will deal with you."

"No, thank ye, boss, I think I better hadn't. Don't believe it would be good for my health if I did. Guess you an' me had better say good-by an' part company."

"Then you mean to work against me?"

"Don't know enough to work for nor 'gainst ye. If you are 'fraid to trust me, I am 'fraid to trust you, and I don't think we could pull worth a cent in harness. I bid you good-day."

With a dignified wave of the hand, which seemed ridiculous and really was so and so intended, Battery Bob turned in another direction.

"But, hold on, boy!" the Western sharp called out.

"Well, what's wanted?"

"If I do want you, where can I find you?"

"You won't want me, though."

"I don't know about that."

"Well, I do."

"It is very likely that I shall want you, and to-night. Where can I find you at ten o'clock?"

"Shouldn't wonder if you would find it a purty hard job to find me at that time," answered Bob. "The fact of the business is, boss, I have cut my eye-teeth, and they are sharp."

"Then you are against me?"

"That's straight, may as well tell you right out. I'm against you, tooth an' tongs, straight from the word Go. I am in this thing on the side of Miss Allen, and if I find you tryin' any more funny work with her, there will be trouble somewheres around, and you will be right in the middle of it."

"An' right; we'll see where you will be, then, my fine fellow."

"Tra-la-la, Sport Gibby! See you later."

They are makin' a fine striped suit for you up the river. Tra-la-la-loo, old boy!"

The gambler's face was black with rage, and his hand moved toward his hip as Bob ran laughingly away. Had he been in some Western gulch, where the crime would have been unknown, Battery Bob would have got a bullet.

CHAPTER XIII.

BOB AND TERRY MAKE A MISS.

"GREAT ginger-slaps!" exclaimed Battery Bob to himself, as he drew up around the next corner. "That was about as hard a rub as I have had in a day or two. But, I bluffed him by talkin' big—Ha, ha, ha!"

The boy had to laugh to himself at the thought of it.

"Now, I'll get onto his gait and shadow him for a change of programme. Bet I come out on top when the smoke clears away, Jerusha! I'm after that certiffykot of Edith Allen's, and I'm goin' to have it if I have to go through fire an' water to get it."

He waited a few moments, just long enough to let the Westerner get ahead of him, and then started after him.

It took him but a few moments to get the man in sight again, and by using care he could then follow him without much danger of detection.

The man returned to the house from which he had emerged some time before, and Bob waited patiently for him to come forth again, which he did in about twenty minutes.

He now carried a grip in his hand.

"Hillo!" exclaimed Bob to himself, "he is off for Long Branch, sure as the tides! If I had the wherewith I'd go to the same resort, but, as I haven't, I'll have to stay at home, I guess. But, he ain't goin' to get off with that paper if I kin help it, an' he has fair warnin' of it by due notice—in my mind."

The man had glanced around, on coming out of the house, but Bob was then out of sight.

As soon as the sport started down the street, Bob was after him.

The Bowery was the nearest thoroughfare, as has been mentioned, and the man went in that direction.

Arriving there, he boarded a car going southward, and Bob boarded another that came along immediately behind the first, both being open cars.

At the Post Office the man got off.

Likewise Bob.

The man crossed Broadway and walked toward the Battery until he came to Rector street, into which he turned and bent his steps toward the North River.

Battery Bob was after him like a shadow, and had not taken much pains, now, to keep very far away. He had made up his mind to have the fellow arrested and bring the matter to a head at once.

That was to say conditionally,—if he could fall in with Terrence McDougal or some other officer he knew.

Applying to a strange policeman he might get the worst of it, for the man might accuse Bob himself of something and there would be a difficulty.

The sport continued straight on, crossed West street, and went out upon the old Long Branch pier, from which the boat was nearly, if not quite, due to start. In fact the last bell rung the same minute.

The man ran, and so did Bob, keeping a sharp look-out for Terrence, for he certainly expected to find him here at this hour.

Presently he espied him, but the officer was at the far end of the dock, while the boat lay alongside, and the gang-plank was about mid way.

The man went on the boat, while Bob, dodging along on the other side of the busy trucks and baggage-wagons, ran to where Terry was idly walking about and swinging his locust.

"Terry?" he cried. "Terry?"

"Hillo! is it you, Bobby? And what is the matter?"

"Come, quick, for the boat is goin'! I want a man arrested and held!"

"What's the charge, boy?"

"Stealin'. But, come! don't stand and ask questions; I'll be responsible and back up every word I say. Come, quick!"

Bob started, urgently motioning the officer to follow him.

Terrence followed, alive to the fact that something important was in the wind or Battery Bob would not act as he did.

"What has he stolen?" he demanded, as they ran.

"A paper belongin' to a lady, and he is the man that had me pitched in the river last night."

"The omadhoun!"

Terry was now as eager as Bob, for he liked the boy and if he could arrest the man who had tried to take his life he meant to do it.

Bob well knew how to play on Terry's bump of combativeness, and had played accordingly, to rouse a feeling for revenge in the breast of the sturdy member of the "finest in the world."

Any man that struck Bob hit Terry at the same time.

The boat was already casting off, and before they could get to the gangway the plank was drawn in.

The Westerner was standing a few feet from the railing, and now he saw what was going on and his dark face was darker still with passion and his fist was clinched hard.

He realized that Battery Bob had shadowed him.

A feeling of hate, commingled with fear, was surging in his breast, though he was safe from arrest.

He was aware that this boy knew the house from which he had just come, and if that house should be visited and searched, there would be found a prisoner, and that prisoner had a tale to tell.

"That's him, Terry!" the dock-rat detective was crying. "Get onto him and yank him out of there!"

"Come here, ye spalpeen!" cried the Irish officer. "Av ye don't, begob it's runnin' av ye in Oi'll be doin'. Do ye hear me, ye long-haired bla'g'ard, ye?"

It was too late for the arrest; the boat was a dozen feet out in the water, and it was as impossible for the officer to reach the man as it was for the man to obey the urgent invitation that had been extended.

"What do you mean?" demanded the Western sharp. "Are you speaking to me?"

"Oi am speakin' to no wan else," cried Terry. "And ye don't come here, by hivin' it's fetchin' av ye Oi'll be!"

"You are on the wrong track, Mr. Officer. I couldn't get there if I would, and it is certain that I wouldn't if I could. When I return, I'll be at your service."

Battery Bob felt a good deal put out, that this thing should have missed fire as it had.

Now, he had rather he had not made the effort.

It was too late, however, for him to regret it, and it would have to pass into the history of the case.

There was one satisfaction, if the man had the paper and was out of reach, he was also where he could not interfere with Battery Bob and his doings for some hours at least.

"There was no mistake about it," Bob called out. "I know you, and I am the one that ordered your arrest."

"Ha, ha! Why, you little sand-fly, what are you talking about?"

"I'm talkin' about what I know, that's all. Hope you have a pleasant trip, and while you are away I'll nose around a little and see what's to be seen. Ta-ta, my third-rate Buffler Willyum; I won't give you away in public yet."

"I'm sorry I can't step ashore, you little rat! If I could, we'd see this thing out, I warn you."

"Bet your life we would," retorted Bob. "Me an' Terry would run you in so quick it would make your head swim. I have got my awful eye on you, Mister Texas, an' I am goin' to keep it there till I run you to your hole, you bet. Battery Bob is in it, you bet!"

The boat was rapidly swinging around, and the man had only time to shake his fist at the boy ere he was out of sight.

"Now, tell me all about it," demanded Terry, leading Bob away.

"You have got the whole facts, Terry, in few words. That feller has stolen a paper that belonged to a fine young lady, and I was after that paper, red-hot. If there is a black sheep astray in this village, he is the sheep aforesaid, to wit."

"See here, Bobby, b'y, you have got onto a bigger case than ye are willing to tell me about, and Oi have a notion to make ye tell all about it."

"Don't see how you would go about it, Terry."

"Oi'd run ye in."

"That would do you a heap of good, now wouldn't it? What charge would you make against me? You couldn't make any."

"Oi could class ye as a suspicious character around the docks, and hint that the best place fur ye would be a home on the island fur a spell, more or less."

"Get out with ye! Couldn't I bring Betsy Sokup to prove that I'm all wool and two yards and a quarter wide? And Jack Tarr to swear that I am a clean clipper in full rig, with fresh paint? I should grin if I couldn't."

"Well, well, it's not a-runnin' av ye in Oi would be, but ye moight let me onto this thing wid ye, and we'll work it together."

"Just what we are doing, Terry, you bet!"

CHAPTER XIV

BATTERY BOB RAISES THE WIND.

TERRENCE McDOUGAL could not see it in just that light, however.

It appeared to him that if he was "in it" at all, he was not in far enough to sight the game.

He argued the thing with Battery Bob, but to no purpose, Bob getting the better of him on almost every point, and finally they parted.

That something was going on, the policeman knew full well, but he could not tell how great the case was, having little to guide him. If they had tried to murder Battery Bob, however, it must be no trifling affair.

Then, too, Bob had told him that another life was in danger, and if that was the case, the game must be big.

"Begob," said Terry to himself, after Bob had left him, "Oi think Oi will be after puttin' Billy McNeil onto your track, me b'y. If you are bound to run your head into danger, ye nade some wan to look afther ye."

Now, this mentioned Billy McNeil was a detective on the force, and as Terry left the dock, swinging his club, he had it in mind to telephone for this Secret Service gentleman without delay. And that was what he did, and an hour later he and McNeil put their heads together.

But, in the mean time, Battery Bob was getting right down to business, in the strange matter.

When he left his officer friend he went at once to the stand kept by Betsy Sokup, where he had a talk with the old woman who had been his friend ever since he could remember.

Betsy listened to what he had to say with patience and interest, but, as he proceeded, Bob noted that her lips began to set together more firmly, her eyes to burn with a peculiar light, and he knew she was as much op-

posed to the scheme as she was to Jack Tarr's wooden leg.

"Never, Bobby, never!" she declared, emphatically, when she had heard all.

"Well, I knowed it, aunty, so I ain't a bit surprised," said Bob. "Seen it in your eye 'fore I'd got half done."

"Do you for one minnit think that I would give you the means to carry you down to Long Branch to hunt down a great hairy villyain, and maybe git killed? Never! It ain't no use your askin' it of me, Bobby Dickery."

"Nuff said, then, aunty. If I can't foller him I kin deal with his partners right here to home, and I bet I'll make 'em dance square to a waltz tune before I git done with 'em. Think I'll go an' pay my respects to the young lady, too, while I am out callin'. 'Ta-ta!'"

Bob had an object in all this.

Those who knew him knew of his friendly relation with the old candy-and-cakes woman.

Should he get into trouble, and not put in his appearance, the police could, by inquiring of her, get on his track and perhaps find him. It was his intention to go by train to Long Branch.

The old lady, though, would not further his scheme, though she did not see its deeper depths, as explained.

He blowed a kiss to her from his fingers, and was off.

She called out to him, but he knew it was only to read a lecture to him and warn him to keep out of danger, so Bob went on.

He now had no money, but, meeting a bootblack whom he knew, he asked the favor of the loan of a nickel, and receiving it, was soon on board an Elevated train and on his way up-town.

A little later he was at the door of the dwelling of Edith Allen.

"Want ter see Miss Allen," he said to the servant.

"Come right in," he was invited. "I will take you right to her."

The servant closed the door and led the way to a room where she knocked and entered.

"The boy," she said.

"Let him come right in."

Bob entered, and the door closed.

"Have you got it?" the young woman asked eagerly.

"Had it," answered Bob, "but I didn't keep it long."

"How was that?"

"Got caught in the act."

"Then it is now lost forever, I fear."

"I don't."

"What brings you here?"

"Fact is, I'm bu'sted, and can't do anything without the scads."

"What in the world are you talkin' bout?"

"You'll have to toss the chink, or I can't do anything."

"Worse and worse. I can't understand you, Bob."

"Then you can't understand plain United States lingo, that's sure. I mean 'I want money.'"

"Oh! Why didn't you say so right out? then I would have known. I never before heard such ridiculous words applied to money."

"Don't know nothin' 'bout that, ma'm, but you will have to 'ply money to me or I won't be in it 'g'inst these rascals. I want to take a run down to Long Branch by train."

"And what takes you to Long Branch?"

"The train will, if you'll ante the glitter."

"If I'll do what?"

"Toss up the chink, as I said before. Furnish the needful."

"Give you the money, you mean? Certainly I'll do that. How much do you require?"

"Don't know the fare, but a ten-case note orter drag me through, I should think. Give me a fiver, if you ain't got a tenner."

"Here is the full amount, my boy. I know I can trust you."

"This is ten of the promised fifty," said Bob, as he pocketed the bill. "If I don't corral that certiffykit I'll make good my 'spenses to you."

"You will do nothing of the kind. I will bear all your expenses, and if you are successful you shall have the fifty besides. But, has that paper been taken to Long Branch?"

"It has."

"Who has got it?"

"The same feller, Texas Long-hair."

"And you tell me you had it in your hand again?"

"That's what I had, but they got onto me. Pickin' pockets is out of my line, an I ain't up in the art."

"The wonder is that thay did not have you arrested, then."

"No wonder 'bout it, ma'm, fer they didn't dare to! I bluffed 'em on that, I tell ye. Say, who was that dude that met you on the dock? I know his name, but I am after his peddygree."

"That was Mr. Harvey Alexander, an acquaintance of mine."

"I knowed all that; tell me somethin' about him that I don't know. It is information I am after."

"So I recognize," with a light laugh.

"Well, he is a well-to-do young man, and one who has been paying attention to me—if I must speak out plainly. Why do you ask?"

"A well-to-do young man, is he? You kin set it down fer fine that he ain't a to-do well young man, allee samee, and I am bettin' on it. I don't like the cut of that feller's nose nor the squint of his off eye—not a bit. Better sail clear of him, I'm tellin' you."

"What do you know about him?"

"Not a thing. But, I read faces, and I don't miss the mark one time out o' ten, that's all."

"You greatly interest me. What do you read in this young man that does not impress you as being all right? Come, tell me everything."

"Wish I could sling the lingo like you kin, ma'm, then mebbly you could understand me when my chin is waggin'. That word impress is good, and I'll store that away to s'prise Jack Tarr with."

"What a boy you are! But, you must be entirely mistaken about Mr. Alexander."

"Mebby I am, but I'm bettin' I ain't. But, I must be off, fer I ain't got none too much time ter ketch that train."

"You must tell me, though, what your suspicion against him is, Bob. I will confess to you that he is a person I do not really admire, but he has forced himself upon me."

"That's his game, I'm bettin'! You are coming in fer a fortune, if we kin bu'st up this skeem o' matterymony, an' Harvey wants to come in fer a share of it—but he don't know nothin' 'bout your marriage; thinks the field is all clear an' that he has the inside track."

"Do you think it possible?"

"Sure as shootin'. He jest came from Long Branch, had a sort o' sleepy look in his squinters, an' they have gamblin' places down there that run all night—that is what's takin' Texas down there this afternoon. But, tra-la; must be goin'. You kin think over the p'inter I have dropped till we meet again."

CHAPTER XV.

BOB TAKES IN A PARTNER.

THE young woman tried to detain the boy longer, but Bob had no time to spare, now.

He knew more or less about the time of

and trains, and that he had only sufficient time to catch a train without breaking his neck to get it.

So, cutting everything short, with the promise to talk longer when his time was in proportion, he beat his retreat and set out on his return to the docks, but not to Battery Park.

Getting the bill changed was little trouble, and that done, he took the Elevated train down-town.

His destination was the Central Railroad Ferry.

He was just in time for the boat to catch the train, and was soon crossing the river.

Once on the other side he was soon bowling along on his journey, and in less than an hour's time was at his destination.

The train was a heavy one, by the way, as were nearly all the trains at that season of the year and that hour of the day, and when it stopped at Long Branch a great crowd of people alighted, among whom Battery Bob was but an atom. No one took notice of him.

There was a long line of howling hackmen just across the covered platform, and with their cries and the hissing of the engine it was almost impossible to hear anything else.

Bob made off across the open ground toward the line of buildings in the direction of the sea.

He was looking around as if in search of some one, and so he was.

Not that he expected to find Owen Gibson so easily—in fact, he knew he could not have yet arrived; but he was looking for some one from whom he could draw information.

Presently he espied the right person—a lad of about his own years, bright in face and bearing alike, barefooted and happy-looking, and Bob put himself in the way of meeting him.

"Say!" hailed Bob.

"Say on," said the other, stopping short and looking at Bob, hands in his pockets.

"Would you mind showin' a chap around this place a bit? I'm a stranger here, and wouldn't know east from west, if it wasn't for the roar of the old ocean over that way," pointing.

There was a heavy surf on, and the ocean was letting its voice be heard, in spite of the bluff.

The boy took an extra squint at Bob before he responded.

"Where are you from?" he then asked.

"New York."

"What ye doin' down here? What's your name?"

"My name's Bob Dickery, called Battery Bob fer short, and I've come down to blow in a brief vacation."

"Well, you don't look like a son of a millionaire, I'm hanged if you do. I ruther like your looks, though, and don't mind gettin' better 'quainted. My name is Jack Baxter."

"What do they call you fer short?"

"Lippy Jack."

"That's a name and a half, that is. What do they call you that for?"

"'Cause I have got too much lip, they say, but it pays to have plenty of it in these days of git up an' git."

"Bet your life it does, Jack! Come, you are jest the feller I was lookin' fer, and I think you an' me kin pull together in double harness like a pair of dock donkeys."

"Where do you want to go?"

"Want to know when the boat will be in that left New York at three?"

"Ought to be here now. Want to go to the pier I s'pose. Lookin' for some friends down?"

"I'm lookin' for the worst crook that ever struck New York."

"Crook?"

"That was what I said."

"Guess you an' me can't pull. If you are in with crooks you can't be in with me, that's all."

"Who said I was in with 'em? You go off before you are lighted, you do! I am after this feller because I am goin' to run him in or bu'st a button a-tryin'. See the p'int?"

"Don't mean to say that you are a detective?"

"Oh, no; but I like to give the police a boost when the chance offers."

"Give me your fin. If you are that sort, you an' me is chums fer fair. That is my lay-out, exactly."

"Good fer you! That's proof again that I know a face when I see it. Was sure you was my kind the minnit I set eyes on you. Let's dig fer that pier, and I'll talk as we go along."

"Work your legs in this direction, then."

Lippy Jack led the way, and Battery Bob told him enough of his errand there to excite his interest and win his aid.

"And you say that man has got the stolen paper with him, eh?" demanded Jack, when Bob ended his story. "And that is what you came here to get? All right, we'll git it."

"That's what I want, and if it can be got without his knowin' it, so much the better."

"We'll try a hack at it, anyhow."

Thus they rattled away, till they came to their destination, where a boat was trying to make fast.

"There she is," cried Jack.

"No, I'll be hanged if she is," declared Bob.

"What's the matter?"

"I'm the worst lunk out of the lunytle 'sylum, that's all. Lucky fer me the fool-killer has gone out of business."

"I don't ketch on, Bob."

"Why, that other boat was the Sandy Hook line, now that I come to think of it, and anybody but a puddin'-headed gilly would have remembered that long ago without once thinkin'."

"How did you get 'em mixed?"

"Had 'em both in mind. Was at the dock this mornin' when the other boat got in, and got another feller in my mind mixed in this same case, and that has got the two boats tangled."

"I see. Well, we'll have to scratch sand to get to the station, now. Don't believe we kin do it, unless we take a rig, an' I ain't got the sugar to salt for that; couldn't hire the hind wheel of a two-wheel cart—"

"Well, I have; you find the rig and I'll flip up the sparkle."

"All right, here comes one."

A cab came along just then, the boys hailed it, and after a moment's parley and the paying of a fee in advance, they got in and the driver rattled away with them.

In a little time they were at their destination.

The train had arrived, had discharged her passengers, and had gone on, and Bob had missed his man!

"Just my luck," the dock-rat detective complained. "But, never say die till you can't get any more wind, and then it won't be necessary to say it. We'll ask some one if he has been seen."

"There he is now!" cried Lippy Jack.

"Sure as you live!"

Jack had espied him through one of the windows, where he stood writing at the telegraph desk.

"Now we are onto him, big as a fire-hoss!" cried Battery Bob. "I'll bet he don't get away from me again till I get that paper. But, he mustn't see me, or I'll be in the soup."

"See! he has just crumpled up a blank and pitched it under the desk."

"Sure enough. We must have that, Jack."

"I'll get it."

Jack went into the room, idly, and as soon as the man turned to the operator's window with his finished message, secured the blank he had thrown away and rejoined Bob on the platform.

CHAPTER XVI.

JACK AND BOB ON THE TRAIL.

"Got it?" demanded Bob.

"You bet!" answered Jack, showing it.

"Good enough. But, say, lend me your hat, will ye?"

"Sure. But, what do you want of it? Ain't as good as yourn."

"He won't know me so quick in it, an' he won't 'spect to see me here."

"That's the ticket; I'll take yours. But, get at what he's put on that paper."

The exchange having been made, Bob opened the blank.

It was addressed to Dan Huston, at the house in which John Barr was a prisoner, and ran thus:

"House is known. Take care. Look out that boy. Be back very first—"

And that was all, a bad sputter of the pen spoiling the blank, or nearly so, showing clearly the reason why it had been discarded.

"Plain as day," said Bob. "I have given him a bad scare, and he will dig out of this and get back to Gotham as soon as possible to see that I don't spoil his game there."

"And you will dig after him."

"Some."

The lads were at a distance from the door, and Bob was standing behind Jack when the man came out.

Gibson looked around for a rig, and seeing the one by which the lads had come to the station just driving off, called out to the driver.

The driver stopped, the man ran to the cab, and after a word or two got in and was wheeled rapidly off, leaving Bob and Jack to stare after him, with no means of following save their legs.

"We'll know more as we git older, I hope," said Bob, with a dry grin.

"I should hope so. But, come, I know a short cut, and we'll get to the other station soon's he kin."

"All you have got to do is to lead the way, and I'll be right with you. If your wind is longer than mine, it is extra long, that's all."

They started, and talked as they ran.

Should the man take the train, Bob would do the same, and he promised Jack to let him know how the matter ended.

They reached their destination before the train, and with plenty of wind to spare, for both were rugged boys and well accustomed to hard exercise; but the man was not there.

The cab was not to be seen.

They waited, the train came and went, and yet the cab did not appear.

"Well, what do you make of it?" demanded Jack.

"Guess we have been dished," answered Bob. "Seems to me I don't know enough to peddle peanuts."

"Why?"

"We ought to guessed it."

"Guessed what?"

"He spoiled that blank on purpose; made that sputter 'cause he was mad!"

"You think so?"

"Sure of it, now. He changed his mind, as he was writin', and jabbed in the pen, hard, and started off new. No tellin' what word he sent."

"Believe you are right, by sand!"

"Let me think hard a minnit. What did he change his mind about? What was he sayin' last?"

He brought out the spoiled blank.

"Why, changed his mind 'bout bein' back by very first train, of course. Why did he change his mind? Had just said look out."

for that boy. Knowed mighty well that boy would be looking out fer him—can bet his life I am!”

“You are a dandy thinker,” cried Jack in compliment.

“Yes; a dandy mush-head, I know it. If I hadn’t been that, I would seen all this sooner.”

“You couldn’t think of it till we found he didn’t take the train; no use your sayin’ so.”

“A boy with brains would have thought of it right off to once.”

“Then I ain’t got no brains, either.”

“Bout like mine.”

“What’s to be done?”

“That’s what I’m tryin’ to pump out of my think-box. I’ll tell ye, Jack, we have got to see the message he did send, or we won’t get on his track to-night.”

“Ha! that’s just the cheese. Let’s get back there, and I’ll work that all right fer ye. I know that operator, and we’ll patch up a story that will win him over into our trap, you bet.”

“No time to lose. Sight a rig, if you can.”

In a moment more a cab was seen and the two boys hailed it and engaged it as they had the first.

They were soon on their way, and presently reached their destination.

They bade their driver wait, this time.

Entering the main room, Jack went straight to the window and asked:

“Say, has Mr. Gibson’s message gone yet?”

“No, haven’t got it off yet; the wire is open.”

“That’s bully. He sent us here in haste to tell you to stop it and send it back to him by us. We came in a cab and got here in a dead rush.”

“Is this straight?”

“Do we look like millionaires, with boodle to spend on cabs?”

The argument was convincing, and the operator handed out the blank that had been left.

Battery Bob read it with all the quickness with which his eyes could follow the words, for he hardly hoped to be able to carry it away with him.

“He didn’t tell us to fetch it back unless we couldn’t fix it, Jack,” he said, soon as he had read it.

“That’s so; but kin ye do it?”

“The operator can.”

“What’s wanted?” the operator asked.

“I’ve changed my mind about letting the message go out of my hands, unless he comes for it himself. I can hold it till you go tell him, though.”

“No; necessary; he only wants two words put in, right there.”

“What are the words?”

“Do not.”

“All right; if you are quite sure of the place.”

“Know it like a book. How much will it be? Was told to pay you spot cash, and then get back and let him know quick.”

“Four cents.”

“Here it is.”

Bob paid the money, and he and Jack went out and got into the cab again, Jack telling the driver where to go.

“We’ll be in for it, if the law gits onto us fer this,” said Jack, rather regretfully.

“The law is going to get hold of Gibson first, though, Jack, and don’t you forget it. I am after him, big as a fire-hoss and a half.”

“What was the message?”

“Couldn’t tell ye exactly word fer word, ’cause I had to read it in double quick time, but I put the spoke in in the right spot, you bet.”

“Where was that?”

“He told Dan Huston to carry on the work as planned, and I slipped in the little words do not. See?”

“That will change things. But, that don’t find your man.”

“Bet it does, then. He’s gone to the — Hotel, where answer is to be sent. He won’t go to New York till mornin’.”

“Then we are onto him, fine.”

“You bet we are!”

The direction to the driver was changed immediately, and when they were set down they were in a short distance of the hotel in question.

There Bob got sight of his man, and did not lose him again until he had finally accomplished his purpose.

Bob changed the expression of his face every time he came in sight of his suspect, and having on Jack’s hat, escaped recognition.

Finally a messenger was seen with a message, and ere long that message was put in Gibson’s hand.

He broke the seal in haste and read it.

As he read his face lighted up, and when he had done he crushed the message up and threw it from him, the same as he had done with the blank at the station.

And that done, he lighted a cigar and began pacing the piazza, giving Jack an excellent opportunity to secure the coveted prize. That message might mean much, and Battery Bob must see it.

When he got it and read it, the dock-rat detective found that his scheme had worked nicely

CHAPTER XVII.

HURRAH, BOB!—ANGRY GIBSON.

“WHAT’S he say?” eagerly demanded Jack.

“It has worked bully,” answered Bob, with great delight. “Huston answers all right, that he will ‘bey orders.’”

“And that means that everything is safe in New York for that other feller what they have got locked up. Now all you have got to do is to get that paper and go home.”

“Yes, that’s all; but it is a sizable job.”

“No matter, we’ll get there.”

“How?”

“Somehow.”

That was the rubber, now, how they were to accomplish their work.

Battery Bob knew he could rely upon his new-made friend, for he had seen enough of him to convince him of that.

They got something to eat while they waited around the neighborhood, keeping watch upon their man, and so the time passed till night came on and the place began to assume a new aspect.

It seemed as if a new class of persons had come with the darkness, men and women, and many of these had one destination.

“What place is that?” asked Battery Bob, drawing Jack’s attention.

“That? That’s the biggest game-house at the Branch.”

“So? Then that’s the place will ketch Texas purty soon, you see if it don’t. Hello! if there ain’t Dude Alexander.”

“Who?”

“A feller I have got carded on my little list.”

“What ‘bout him?”

“In love with the lady I am workin’ this racket fer, and wants to marry her to git her fortune. But, he can’t do it while Battery Bob is on deck, you bet your last nickel on that.”

Harvey it was, true enough, and he headed straight for the gambling establishment and entered.

“I’d give a dollar if I could walk Edith in onto him,” declared Bob.

“Here comes Texas,” whispered Jack.

“Sure ‘nuff.”

The Western sharp sauntered out of the hotel, smoking a fresh cigar, and made his way to the gambling establishment in the company of a man whose acquaintance he had formed.

“How kin we git the paper?” asked Jack.

“Knock him down with a club and it away from him.”

“Oh, yes, we are full of that, we are; that would work fine, wouldn’t it?”

“Then don’t ask foolish questions. Set your think-mill to runnin’, and find out a way.”

“If we only knowed whether he has it with him or not.”

“Where would it be if it ain’t with him?”

“Mebby in his grip.”

Bob drew a long whistle, and scratched his head.

“Wonder if that’s possible?” he asked himself. “Don’t hardly believe it is, but it’s worth seein’ about, anyhow.”

“What will you do?”

“Play the same game we played at the station.”

“Ha! just the thing. Mebby it will work. Go ahead, and I’ll back ye.”

“No, I’ll do it myself. You live here, and you would git into trouble, mebby.”

Bob waited until the Western sharp had entered the gaming-palace, when he left Jack and boldly entered the hotel.

He marched straight to the desk.

“This is the ranch where Mr. Owen Gibson is stoppin’, ain’t it?” he said, full of confidence.

“Yes, he is registered here, but he isn’t in just now—”

“I know all about that,” interrupted Bob. “He’s gone over to the card shebang to show your folks how to win a pile. He sent me here—”

“For the papers he left on the case—”

“Prezack.”

Bob’s heart had given a great leap at the word papers, but he was quick as a wink with his answer, though he had been on the point of saying gripsack.

“I thought he would send for them,” the clerk rattled on, taking some papers from somewhere under the desk. “He took them out of his pocket while he stood here getting some cigars, and walked off and left ‘em.”

“That’s what he said,” agreed Bob, eagerly taking them. “He’ll have ‘em in a double jiffy, though, and no harm done.”

“They were safe enough here; tell him that.”

“And they are safe enough now, too; he knows me, you bet. I’m Battery Bob, the sleekest rat that prowls the docks round Battery Park. Gibby knows me, you bet, an’ he knows his papers will be safe in my keepin’.”

Bob was off, with that, and ran straight across to the gaming-place and entered.

This he did for the benefit of the clerk, should he watch.

He went no further than just inside the door, however, where he remained for several minutes, finally coming out and signaling to Lippy back.

“What ‘n world you up to?” Jack demanded.

“Oh! ka-whoop! ka-whoop!” cried Bob, as loudly as he dared. “I fell into the softest puddin’ you ever heard of in all your life. Ha, ha, ha!”

And he danced and pranced as if he had taken leave of his senses.

“You have got ‘em bad, no mistake,” observed Jack, without a smile.

“So would you have, if you was me,” Bob answered.

Battery Bob told his partner of his success, and it was then Jack’s turn to express his glee. He was almost as wild over the easy victory as was Bob himself. They fairly hugged each other.

“And you say you ain’t got no brains,” sneered Jack.

“Ain’t got much, anyhow,” declared Bob. “T’other feller does it all, not havin’ any. Ha, ha, ha!”

“Yes, but you got in your fine work pickin’ him up so quick like you did. I am proud of you, Battery Bob, and if ever I go

to Noo York you bet I'm going to hunt you up."

"Yes, you must, sure. But, speakin' 'bout home 'minds me that I must git there with a double hump. What's the next train? If there ain't none I'll hire a enjun, if I kin get it fer seven dollars more or less, mebbe less, an' run it myself."

"You have got jest enough time to ketch the train now, and not a second to spare, Bob."

"Lead the way, then, Jack, an' see if you kin beat me runnin'."

They were off with a rush at once.

Reaching the station with time to spare, Bob bought his ticket, and as the train drew up he shook hands with Jack.

"Good-by, Jack," he said. "I won't forget you in a hurry, you kin bet, and you kin look fer a letter to your address inside of a week, with a bill in it that will buy you a new outfit from top to toe, I'm bettin'. Don't fail to call on me if you come to the cit."

"You bet I won't. I'll remember where you have told me—Battery Park, care of Betsy Sokup, candy and-cakes woman, or Jack Tarr, ex-sailor. Oh, I'll find you, you bet. Now you're off, Bob!"

"Good-by, Jack!"

"Good-by, Bob!"

"'Rah fer us!"

"You bet!"

And waving their hats at each other, thus they parted.

It was a late hour when the Western sharp left the gambling place and returned to the hotel, and he was going straight to his room when the clerk spoke to him and he stopped.

"Got your papers all right, I s'pose?" the clerk remarked.

Gibson clapped his hand to his breast pocket, and his face paled in an instant.

"My papers!" he exclaimed. "Never thought of them. I remember, now, I took them out while getting some cigars of you—But, where are they?"

"What? Mean to say the boy didn't bring them to you? He came here not five minutes after you had gone out and said you had sent him for them, and I saw him carry them straight to the Carlo."

"I sent nobody for them—didn't think of them till this minute. Who was the boy? Did you know him?"

"No, didn't know him, but he said he'd come from you, and his story was too straight to doubt. This beats the mischief. Called himself Battery Bob—"

"Thunderation! I am ruined!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

BATTERY BOB'S BIG ROUND-UP.

WHEN Battery Bob reached New York, he made all haste to go to the home of Edith Allen—to give her that name still, though she now had another of right and of certainty.

He found her at home, and placed the marriage-certificate in her hands, to her almost unbounded delight. Her mother was present, and insisted that Bob's reward should not be less than a hundred dollars—not a single penny less, as she emphatically put it.

"Tell you what you do then," said Bob. "You just send half of it by mail to Jack Baxter, called Lippy Jack, Long Branch, continent of New Jersey, and I'll be satisfied. If it hadn't been fer him you wouldn't got no paper, and he has got to be rewarded somehow. And now I must be off."

"And I must burn this paper this minute," declared Edith.

"Do it, Edith," urged the mother. "Every proof of that marriage will then have been removed. Burn it instantly, my daughter."

"Well, I reckon you know," said Bob, "but it is all the blankest kind of a mystery to me."

The certificate was burned, then and there, and Bob took his leave.

He went straight to the police station to which Terrence McDougal belonged, and there, the moment he entered the door, a hand fell upon his shoulder.

Looking up quickly, he expected to see the face of Terry, but, instead, he encountered the grim countenance of Detective McNeil, who had been looking for him everywhere since his interview with McDougal.

"Ha! I've got you, have I?" he demanded.

"Looks like it," answered Bob, promptly. "But, you don't want to detain me, for I am onto one of the crookedest pieces of rascally biz that ever took place in New York Cit."

"What do you mean?"

Bob reeled off the story, as fast as he could. "And we want to have Terry in it," he wound up. "I promised him, and he has got to be there."

"Oi will be there, you can bet, me b'y!" called out a familiar voice at that moment, and the gallant Irish member of the finest put in his appearance for duty—the second half of his split-trick.

"Bully fer you, Terry!" cried Bob. "We are onto 'em now, you bet!"

A number of policemen were detailed for the work, and under the command of Detective McNeil they set out.

At the same time a telegram was sent to Long Branch, putting the authorities there on track of Owen Gibson, for, among the papers recovered by Battery Bob, was evidence against him of a grave nature.

Battery Bob led the way to the house where the prisoner was held.

A ring at the bell caused the door to be opened, and the moment it was opened the detective and some of his men entered.

Battery Bob was still to the fore, alongside of the Irish member, and they entrapped the rascals before they knew what had happened, almost. The officers who had been stationed outside found nothing to do.

The prisoner was discovered, and as soon as released he exposed the whole plot, denouncing Owen Gibson and Charles Turney in most bitter terms.

He was most emphatic in declaring that no marriage had taken place.

This was not true; he had a reason.

He was held as a witness, and on the following morning Owen Gibson was sent on from Long Branch in the keeping of an officer.

At his hearing in the police court the whole matter was made public, and the rascally scheme was held up to the light. Charles Turney was a prisoner, as were also Dan Huston and Joe Fink.

Edith Allen was an heiress, conditionally.

If she married before coming of age, she would lose all, according to her grandfather's will.

In that event, her cousin, Charles Turney, would come into possession of the fortune, and she would be left penniless. The reader can readily grasp the rest.

Charles Turney was a worthless rascal who had been some years in the West, and now was in the power of Owen Gibson, a gambler and sharper generally, and together they concocted a scheme to have the young lady marry before she came of age.

In order to do this, it was necessary to select some one to marry her, and whom she would marry, and the man selected to play this part was John Barr, a handsome fellow, himself also another of Gibson's victims.

Now, as Barr was a hypnotizer, their success was a foregone conclusion. Gibson supplied Barr with money, and Gibson and Turney came on to New York to see that he carried out his part of the agreement. After the marriage it was the plan of Gibson and Turney to get hold of the certificate and publish it to the world, but there a cog slipped.

Barr fell in with their plans, and playing well his part, exercising his subtle art, the

marriage took place; but, in the mean time, Barr fell desperately in love with the young woman and finally resolved to denounce his accomplices. This led to the intention of doing away with him, and as we have narrated, to the righting of the whole matter, through the work of Battery Bob, who had done it all, really.

Mrs. Allen had repeatedly warned her daughter not to marry until she had come of age, and Edith had certainly no intention of doing so; but, hypnotism was too much for her. Immediately after the marriage, to which Gibson and Turney had been secret witnesses, they, together with the two toughs we have seen, pounced upon Barr and dragged him away, telling, or reminding, Edith of what she had now done. She, immediately realizing, and almost crazed at the thought, sought suicide, and the toughs had followed her for the purpose of securing the certificate.

Battery Bob, however, took a hand in the game just here, and a spoke was put in the villains' wheel.

The whole four, upon this and other charges, were sent to Sing Sing for a term of years that will do them much good, if they live to get out again.

Turney, through a rascally lawyer, tried to prove that a marriage had taken place, and that he was the rightful heir, but not a bit of proof could be found.

When Edith came of age, she married John Barr again, this time openly, and thus was Harvey Alexander put out of the race for all time. He was now known for what he was, and Edith despised him more than ever. He did not trouble her with his presence after one interview.

The fortune came to Edith, and she and her husband enjoy it.

Barr was of good family, and became a worthy man from the time when his love for Edith awakened his nobler nature.

Battery Bob was handsomely rewarded, and fifty dollars was sent to Jack Baxter, as Bob had requested.

Neither was Terrence McDougal forgotten, nor Detective McNeil.

We must not forget to mention, ere closing, that Battery Bob won the wager he had laid with his officer friend. Jack Tarr and Betsy Sokup became man and wife—all through Bob's masterly strategy!

Terrence continued sampling Betsy's cakes till she would have done anything to avenge herself upon him, and the only chance she saw was to lend herself to the winning of Bob's bet! But, in the way was a wooden leg, and she could never abide a wooden leg—never!

Battery Bob fixed that all right, when the proper time came. He put Jack Tarr up to the scheme of laying aside his wooden leg and appearing before the object of his devotion on a crutch, with the leg of his trousers pinned up behind, showing him for just what he was—a one-legged man. And this scheme worked like a charm and Betsy succumbed.

"I never could abear anything that was like a sham, Jack Tarr," she said, "and a wooden leg is about the worst sham that I kin think of. I'll be yourn, dear Jack, if you have bid good-by to that sham forever."

"Betsy, I have," was the old salt's gallant answer. "For you, I'd face the cannon's mouth and lay off the other leg, too, if need be—"

"Good heavens, no! What would I do with a no-legged man?"

"Well, just as you say."

So it was arranged, to the satisfaction of all concerned, save maybe Terrence the cop; but he paid the bet without a murmur and proposed a cheer for Battery Bob.

THE END.

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